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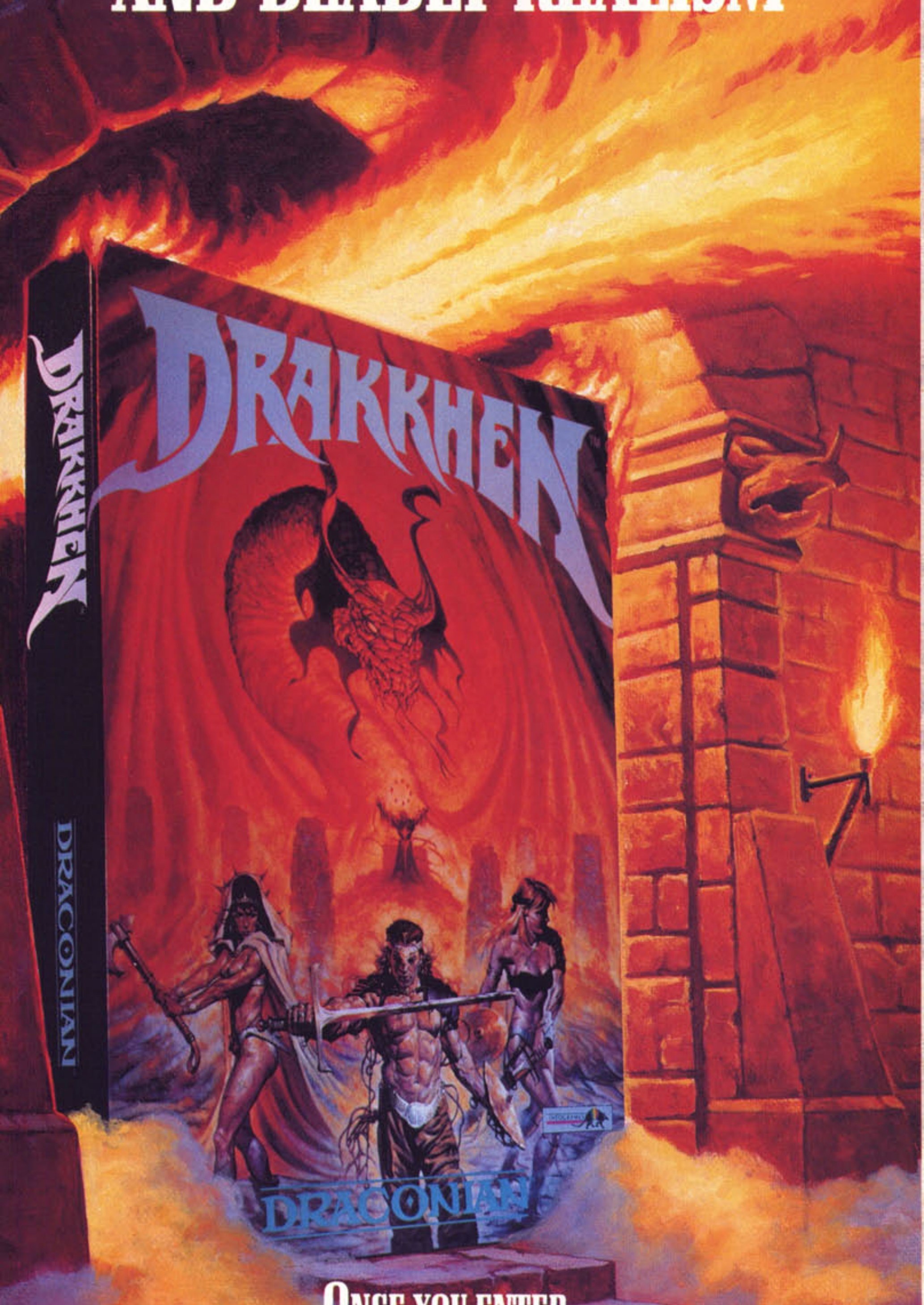
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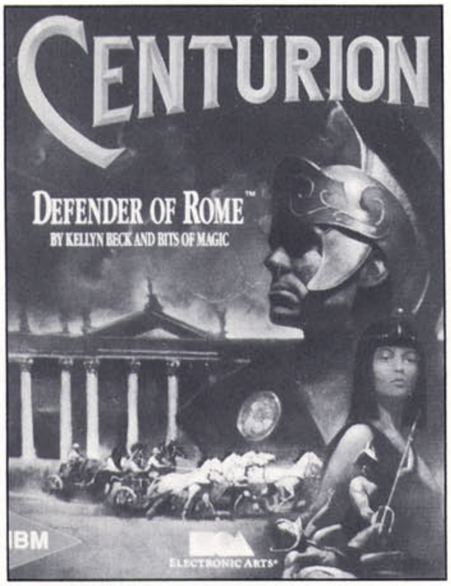
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Covering the World of Computer Games for Nine Years

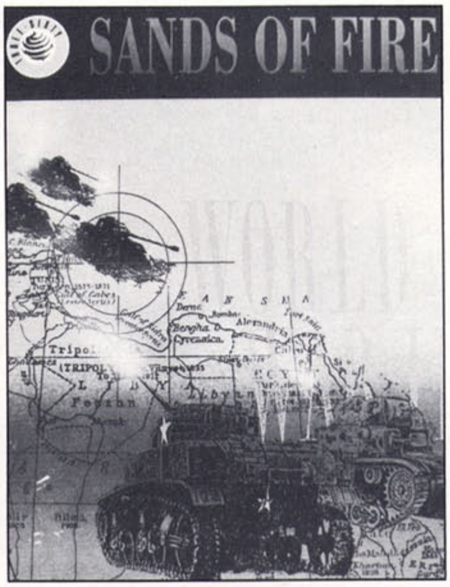
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Psalm 9:1-2

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Circle Reader Service # 34

Accolade
550 South Winchester Blvd. #200
San Jose, CA 95128

STRIKE ACES: INTERNATIONAL BOMBING COMPETITION: In 1984, each of the NATO and Warsaw Pact nations was invited to send their "Top Gun" bombers and crews to participate in a competitive strike event in the Dakotas. "Strike Aces" takes you to that competition, challenging you to fly a variety of strike aircraft (while avoiding a computer controlled series of "enemy" fighters). With an emphasis on game over simulation, even non-hardcore pilots will enjoy "Strike Aces". The game includes a "design your own mission" feature, as well as mouse support. IBM ($49.95), Commodore 64/128 ($39.95). Circle Reader Service #1.

The Avalon Hill Game Company
4517 Harford Road
Baltimore, MD 21214

COMBOTS: This game is an interesting, chess-like "RobotWars" clone. Players maneuver their combots around a hex grid board full of terrain, taking care to insure proper facing, while seeking out enemy combots. Each combot must worry about energy allocation to the various systems on board, track with radar and beacons, make repairs, replenish supplies at base, etc. Campaign games and custom combots can also be designed. C-64/128 ($19.95). Circle Reader Service #2.

Digital Wizards,Inc.
2727 Camino Del Rio South #340
San Diego, CA 92108

HEART OF THE DRAGON: This is an independently produced fantasy/arcade adventure where the player(s) choose from two characters: psionic monk or martial arts master. It has the look and feel of a standard European import and, although the game is supposed to run on *all* Amiga computers, those who use 512K machines will find that character maneuver options are rather limited. Amiga ($49.95). Circle Reader Service #3.

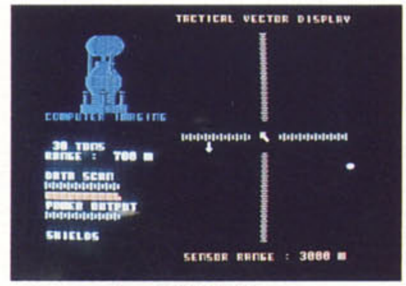
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The Advertiser Index is on page 62



Strike Aces



Combots



Heart of the Dragon



PC Globe



Secret of the Silver Blade



Faces...Tris III

on "PC Nations", flags and national anthems supplement your "PC Globe" program. The nice colors and sounds are a pleasant addition. ($29.95). Circle Reader Service #4.

PC USA: (not pictured) This is the USA version of "PC Globe", with even more exacting and detailed information on this country and Puerto Rico. Includes health statistics, crime rates, climate trends, state histories, employment and economic charts, educational statistics, and much more. Easy to access comparative analysis, time zones (which adjust for daylight savings time) and several other features greatly enhance this program. IBM ($69.95). Note that both "PC Globe" and "PC USA" will have annual updates available for $20-$30. Circle Reader Service #5.

Strategic Simulations, Inc.
675 Almanor Avenue, Suite 201
Sunnyvale, CA. 94086

SECRET OF THE SILVER BLADES: The "Dungeon Masters" at SSI have stirred up another batch of role-playing stew in this, the third part of their quality *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* line. This story, set in the world of Forgotten Realms, puts players in a mining town beset by evil hordes unleased by the unknowing miners. The rich storyline is enhanced by SSI's trademarked Journal Entries, the graphics continue to improve, and two new spell levels have been added to the magic-users repertoire. (Mouse support, CGA/EGA/Tandy). IBM($49.95), C64($39.95). Circle Reader Service #6.

Spectrum HoloByte
2061 Challenger Drive
Alameda, CA 94501

FACES...TRIS III: Glasnost, Schmasnost! The Soviets are still trying to corrupt the minds of capitalists worldwide. Their latest scheme involves another take-off on the mind-warping hit, Tetris. In this product, players must create cohesive countenances out of facial segments as they fall downward. Stack the forehead, on the eyes, on the nose, on the mouth, on the chin, for a perfect face. The game includes 60 different faces, including well-known figures like Santa and Margaret Thatcher, 10 levels of increasing difficulty, and a two player competition mode via a null modem link. IBM ($34.95). Circle Reader Service #7.

To "Knight" The Knights

"Sir" Prizes and Excitement at the Consumer Electronics Show

Although the booths at the Consumer Electronics Show were decked out with plaques honoring those games nominated for our "Game of the Year" awards (our award year runs from one Summer CES to another) and a Software Showcase depicted products which the organizers of CES thought worthy, there was not and has never been an award for the journalists who cover computer games. At the June show, however, Lord British elected to surprise both the Editor-in-Chief and Editor of *Computer Gaming World* with a unique honor. In celebrating the tenth anniversary of *Ultima*, Lord British inducted both Sipe and Wilson into the exclusive circle known as the Knights of Britannia. Only two journalists were chosen to receive this recognition.

Therefore, since the July-August edition of *CGW* talked about the trends in the computer game industry, let's see what these two "lords" see happening in each computer game genre over the next six months.

Adventure and Role-Playing

The categories of adventure and role-playing will be well-represented in the latter part of 1990. **New World** is bringing *Might and Magic II* to both the Amiga and the Macintosh. For those who have forgotten, this is an extremely large game with lots of monster-mashing, adjustable difficulty levels and now, even more impressive graphics. **Accolade**'s *Search for the King* (described last issue), **SSI**'s *Secret of the Silver Blades* (their latest Forgotten Realms (Worlds?) product and probably their largest adventure yet) and **Paragon Software**'s *Mega-Traveller 1: The Zhodani Conspiracy* (based on the pen and paper game) should have all reached your store by the time you read this.

By the fall, however, additional titles will join these. **Dynamix** has two graphic "point and click" adventures that offer a unique new look. *Blade Hunter: Rise of the Dragon* features a film noir look at a dark future and *Heart of China* features a larger-than-life romantic adventure on a finely painted canvas of digitized pixels. While "point and click" interfaces are under discussion, **UbiSoft**'s *B.A.T.* also presents a dark futures with a fascinating graphic feel. **Lucasfilm**'s Ron Gilbert (father of their graphic adventure interface) has teamed with artist Mark Ferrari (and others) to develop *The Secret of Monkey Island*, a romp through pirate lore with a look that is similar and a game that is bigger than *Loom*. **Accolade**'s *Altered Destiny* (briefly described last issue), **NEC**'s *Ys* (a CD-ROM product on the **Turbo-Grafx 16** which features both of the best-selling Japanese action-adventures), **Interplay**'s *Lord of the Rings* (see the Sneak Preview) and **Paragon**'s *The Punisher* (based on **Marvel Comics**' violent vigilante) also feature on-screen, intuitive interfaces.

One goal of **Virgin Mastertronic**'s *Spirit of Excalibur* was to create an easy icon-driven interface for a combination strategy and action game. In this game of Arthurian lore, players undergo several mini-quests in order to escalate from easy strategy to more sophisticated RPG-style puzzles and win the game. Noting the "spiritual" aspects of the Arthurian quests, the game even features a Faith attribute to measure one's progress.

Moving ever deeper into mankind's spiritual past, **California Dreams** and **Westwood Associates** have returned to the fertile subject matter of mythology for *Ancient Dreams*. In the game, players assume the role of the illegitimate son of Zeus, trying to regain his place on Mt. Olympus. Although the tales are based on myth and the optimal solution is to follow the myth, the game features 18-20 locations and non-linear possibilities for winning the game.

Those who like more traditional role-playing games will enjoy the mini-quests involved in **New World Computing**'s *Tunnels & Trolls* game (largely based on the solitaire dungeons available in the early '70s), **Electronic Arts**' *Fountain of Dreams* (expected to be the foundation piece for a new fantasy series in *The Bard's Tale* tradition), and **Origin**'s *Savage Empire* (the first in the "Worlds of Ultima" series). The latter is the stuff of which pulp fiction (a la A. Conan Doyle's Professor Challenger stories and Edgar Rice Burroughs' *Pellucidar* series) was made, asking the entertaining question, "What if dinosaurs had survived and technological man discovered them?" As noted last issue, George Alistair Sanger's soundtrack will

(Continued on page 75)

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Inside The Industry

Mediagenic Lands 16-bit Nintendo Development

On July 2, 1990, **Mediagenic, Inc.** (NASDAQ: MGNC) announced that it had become the first United States software firm to be selected as a developer for **Nintendo**'s *Super Famicom* video game system. The company's first three products on the new platform are expected to be: a *BattleTech* simulation, an air combat simulator and a sports game. Given the expected superiority of the new machine's screen handling techniques and excellent scaling capability, it is significant that, at least, two of the three announced products use three-dimensional polygon-filled graphics.

Sources close to Japanese production of the Super Famicom indicate that the machine has considerably more addressability than the **Sega** *Genesis* machine and sound capability which is much easier to program than the current video game formats. Bruce Davis, Mediagenic Chairman of the Board, was so impressed with the Super Famicom that he announced, "The capabilities of this next-generation video game system are extraordinary. With it, we have finally reached the point where the depth and quality of video games will clearly surpass that of computer entertainment".

The announcement of a U.S. developer for the Super Famicom sends an important signal to U.S. consumers. U.S. cartridge development insures that there will be products for the domestic market *whenever* Nintendo decides to place the 16-bit in the North American sales channel. With the Super Famicom scheduled for late 1990 release in Japan, *CGW*'s best bet is that Nintendo is putting production in place for a formal unveiling of the U.S. version at the Summer Consumer Electronics Show in 1991 and full product roll-out prior to Christmas of 1991.

California Legislature Nears Endorsement of Censorship

The Senate Judiciary Committee of the State of California approved an amended version of A. B. 3280 on June 26, 1990. Assembly Bill 3280 is the Tanner bill that would forbid the depiction of any alcohol or tobacco package or container in any *video game* intended primarily for use by minors. As defined, the bill did not differentiate between video games, coin-op entertainments or computer games. It also did not delineate how enforcement agencies were to determine whether a game was intended primarily for minors or not.

As amended, the bill proscribes only *paid* advertising in video, computer or coin-op games "intended primarily for minors."

SubLogic Facing Double Suits

Microsoft is currently working on future *Flight Simulator* projects with Bruce Artwick's **Bruce Artwick Organization** in a separate agreement from the original relationship with **SubLogic**. Currently, SubLogic faces lawsuits from both Microsoft and Artwick. These are separate and distinctive suits. Microsoft's suit has to do with licensing rights/marketing rights over technology associated with *Flight Simulator III*, while Artwick's suit has to do with the code itself.

$20 Million Libel Suit Filed Against Cinemaware

Citing trade libel, unfair competition and violation of a Federal racketeering statute, **Beyond Software, Inc.** (a small San Francisco area firm contracted to develop *TV Sports: Baseball* for **Cinemaware**) filed a $20 million dollar lawsuit against **Cinemaware** over a letter sent from Phyllis Jacob, president of **Cinemaware**, to prospective publishers of a computer baseball program developed by **Beyond Software**. Originally intended to be part of the *TV Sports* line as *TV Sports: Baseball*, **Cinemaware** canceled the project on May 15, 1990. When the developer began to try to market the program elsewhere, they were told that Cinemaware was claiming that they owned all the rights and Beyond would not be able to sell it. Cinemaware's letter claimed full ownership of the program citing one paragraph of the contract, while Beyond claims that Cinemaware's cancellation of the contract brought another paragraph into play in which all rights reverted to Beyond.

Of course, the bottom line for computer baseball fans is that the future of the game originally entitled *TV Sports: Baseball* is, in the worst case, in doubt, and in the best case, further delayed by legal considerations.

Television Discovers Computer Games

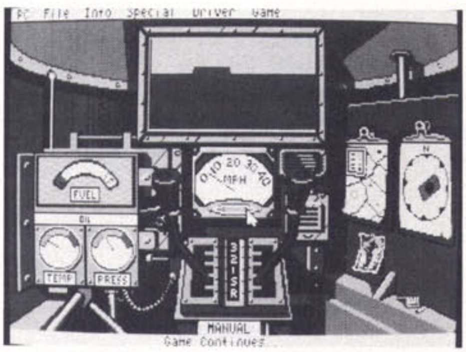
Both **Broderbund Software** and **Lucasfilm Games** have entered into agreements for production of television series related to computer game products. Broderbund has entered into agreement with animation house, **DIC** (*Inspector Gadget* and *Captain Planet and the Planeteers* among others), to produce a *Carmen Sandiego* cartoon series. **Lucasfilm Games** is cooperating with a production company in development of a live action comedy based on *Maniac Mansion*. *Maniac Mansion* will air on the **Family Network**.

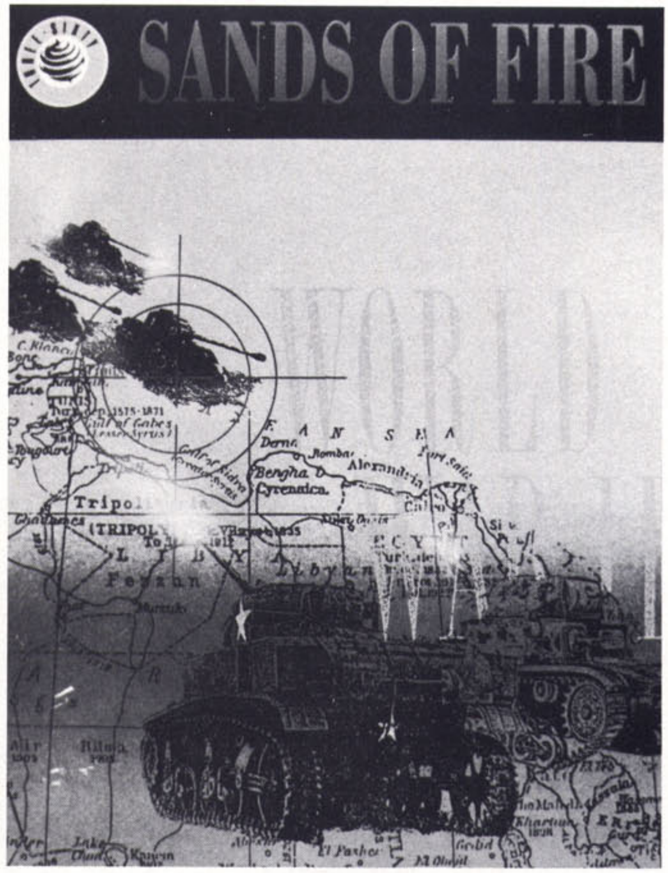
At Sea in the Desert

Three-Sixty's Sands of Fire

by Bob Proctor

TITLE:	Sands of Fire
SYSTEMS:	Macintosh (IBM soon)
# PLAYERS:	1
PRICE:	$49.95
DESIGNER:	Digital Illusions
PUBLISHER:	Three Sixty Pacific Campbell, CA





Sands of Fire (*SOF*) is a World War II tank simulation set in North Africa. It is designed by Digital Illusions, the same people that designed *PT-109* for **Spectrum HoloByte** and is very reminiscent of it: the terrain is as flat as an ocean, you take part in one or more short missions, there is a strong emphasis on the view "from the turret" with targets appearing on the horizon and growing until they can be identified. Finally, you can play the game as either an arcade shoot 'em up or a more serious simulation.

Set Sail in the Desert

Perhaps, the element that makes this seem most like a naval game is the terrain. Three words describe the terrain: "flat, flat, flat." It's even flatter than it looks. There are always low ridges or "escarpments" on the horizon but, like mirages, they recede as you approach. There are no high spots or low spots, no way to get hull-down to present a smaller target. One could argue that this simplification was "realistic enough" for the flat terrain around Tobruk or in western Egypt but it just doesn't fit for the rugged terrain of Kasserine Pass or the mountains of Tunisia. The land may be as level as a billiard table but, at least, one can't see "forever". Tanks pop into view at a range of about 3000 yards, well within accurate range for the main guns. An enemy at this distance is always accompanied by a towering cloud of dust so they cannot be missed as long as one is looking in the right direction. It seems a little funny that this cloud can never be seen *before* the vehicles themselves can be seen, but that's a simplification that the designers have chosen. It really wouldn't make much difference if it was possible to see dust clouds at greater range, though, since *SOF* is not a game of maneuver. The German units always follow a predefined path and schedule and this can be seen on the map at lower skill levels. That Rommel *must* be a hard driver; one never encounters a German vehicle that was standing still (and thus *not* creating this tell-tale dust cloud). Unlike *PT-109*, however, there is no variation in weather or lighting, no dawn, no night time.

A Room With A View

The game has two active views: driver and commander. The player gets to be both. The driver sits below where there is a small window. Through this opening, one can see straight ahead and there are also controls for the speed and direction of the tank available. The commander sits up in the turret where a person would normally have his head sticking out and be able to see all around. In *SOF*, the commander is always "buttoned up", but to provide decent visibility, the player is given a nice picture window with a view of about 180 degrees. This view can be pivoted by rotating the turret. The commander also serves as the gunner in this game and it is with the weapons systems that *SOF* has the most realistic feel. One chooses a round from the racks, watches the loader reach in to put it into the breech (it *must* be the loader, no one else has arms that hairy!), aim, fire and pull the eject handle to get rid of the spent casing. With full animation and sound, it's quite a show! On a Mac Plus or SE, however, it's slow enough that most players will probably turn some or all of it off to speed up play after the novelty wears off. The loading animation, in particular, slows things down. The type of ammo loaded is shown on the breech of the gun, a nice touch.

Targets appear small and grow. As they get closer, it is possible to identify what type of vehicles they are and also guess accurately at their current course and direction. The gunsight provides a slightly magnified view and must be used for accuracy at longer ranges. There are a variety of different targets, including staff cars and half-tracks but most are some form of

tank. These range from leftovers from 1940 up to the huge Tiger tanks that fought in the later stages of the battle for Tunis.

If a single battle is desired, the theater of war is selected from six choices. A player can be the British during three different periods of the fighting around Tobruk, from early 1941 to mid-1942, or El Alamein in late 1942. Or one can be the Americans at Kasserine Pass or Tunisia in 1943. In individual battles, players command a platoon of one to five tanks but do not give orders; the others will follow your example in all actions.

For those with more time, a campaign game is available where one can take either the British or American force. It is possible to play through all of the battles for each theater before moving on to the next, but results from one battle don't influence the type or numbers of tanks with which the next is started. So, what the campaign game really amounts to is going for medals.

Aid for the Commander

Several informational screens are available. Action is suspended while the player examines these. Most useful is the map view which can be reached with just a click of the mouse from either driver's or commander's position. Personal and Unit Status screens and controls for sound and level of realism are available from the pull-down menus.

There are four types of Allied tanks: Matilda, Crusader, Stuart, and Sherman. Although the player is given a type of tank appropriate to the period, they all look the same on the inside. At the arcade level, they all *perform* about the same too. One can zoom around with any popgun, killing Tigers with abandon. At more serious levels, those 37mm rounds start to bounce off (the only way to tell a bounce from a miss is by sound)!

Gamers used to the detail of board games will find that everything in *SOF* is greatly simplified in favor of overall feel. *SOF* is a game of tank *combat*. The whole battle structure is just a way to give some background to the combat situations. Fortunately, it works. When a player finds himself in the midst of The Cauldron with tanks racing in all directions and he's firing as fast as he can load, it's a thrill.

Further, by the time this review hits the stands, there should be a new, improved version of *Sands of Fire*. It will have a number of minor improvements (including a control for game speed to slow things down on the newer, super-fast Macs). It will also fix the worst problem to be found in the game—the strange teleportation of all tanks back to their point of departure whenever the player's tank is shot out from under him and it is time to transfer command to another tank.

Well Done

Frankly, *Sands of Fire* is a competent program that does not break any new ground in computer gaming. Still, graphics and sound are above average and, though it is not an overly accurate simulation, it has enough realistic "feel" to satisfy many of us. Further, it is very easy to play and successfully recreates some of the feel of the frenzied tank battles around Tobruk. **CGW**

The Rumor Bag

by Rhett Beauregard Jackson



Now I know why they call it "Hotlanta"! I thought it might have been because of the Cheetah-Elite bottomless/topless go-go bar across the street from the Hilton, but it turns out that the Southerners in the know are referring to the humidity combined with the heat.

Of course, Atlanta isn't the only item that's "hot" this time of year. In fact, things were so "hot" at the recent Origins game convention that it was hard to concentrate on the rumor biz. A fellow who looked amazingly like one of the **Cinemaware** artists was asking a lovely Polynesian woman dressed in a barbarian outfit made of animal skin if she'd ever considered starring in a CD-ROM product. When she protested that she was only interested in men who respect her mind, he replied that Cliff Johnson's first product for **Cinemaware** features a female protagonist. Entitled *Three*, the heroine is an executive who, by a freak and improbable accident, loses the number three from her spreadsheet. She must then chase the number through the land of letters and numbers to retrieve it, solving the classic Cliff Johnson-style puzzles as she does so.

I didn't hear the end of the previous conversation, so I don't know if he managed to sign her up for his companies upcoming romance title on CD-I or not. That's because two lithe and languid lovelies clad in little more than phasers passed within my line of sight. I decided to leave my artist friend behind and get closer to these live action clones of Japanimation's "Dirty Pair", Kei and Yuri. It appears they were trying to catch up to Lord British. The Yuri clone insisted that she had seen a contract for a multi-player version of *Ultima* in Lord British's hands when they had gotten his autograph the night before. "I think it's going to be called *Multima* and it's going to show up on something called **Quantum**," she said. "It looks like they're expecting to sell more than 100,000 shelf units of the front end in regular stores."

I decided to head over to Jim Dunnigan's 24-hour marathon. Who could possibly believe that a seminar could be well attended at three o'clock in the morning? It was packed. Jim talked about his *Hundred Years War* game to go live on **GEnie** in late October. There are to be 300+ player positions in the game. Players play one of the three hundred significant historical characters during the era. Each actual day of play time equals three months so the campaign will last 400 days.

Feeling in need of some substantive repast, I ventured over to Pittypat's Porch, that cornucopia of colonial cuisine that should *never* be missed on a trip to Atlanta. Who should I see but Loren Wiseman (of FASA fame), Larry Bond (author of *Red Phoenix* and *Harpoon*), Bill Swartz (designer of the first two U.S. versions of **Koei** games) and Evan Brooks (our own curmudgeonly reviewer). Evan Brooks showed me his KGB ID card (from **Titan Comics**), complete with motto in Russian and Larry Bond showed me his "Commander in the Soviet Navy" ID card. I told them everyone was switching sides these days. You didn't know whether to watch the video game or disk-based game market. In fact, **Cinemaware** plans to develop and debut their *TV Sports: Hockey* game on the **NEC Turbo-Grafx 16**. Then, they expect to add some statistics handling and roster editing in order to make a "pure-bred" computer game out of it.

Swartz was eating the wild boar dinner and spotted my bag-clad visage first. Pointing at his dinner, he asked, "Sort of reminds you of your editor, doesn't it?"

"The bore part or the wild part?" I asked with considerable discretion. They declined to take the bait, figuring that neither Wilson nor Sipe were personages to trifle with, so (at the risk of inflating my travel and expense report to where it matches my waistline), I joined another party with more loquacious potential sources. There, I discovered that **GEnie** has three other games in progress. *Federation II* from Great Britain is a space trading text oriented game, currently undergoing playtesting. I was intrigued by *Feudal Entry*, a text-based diplomatic game from **Adventures Unlimited, Inc.** and *Dragon's Gate*, a text-based role-playing game by Mark Jacobs. Both are set to go live in the fall.

I returned to the convention and was amusing myself by looking at the costumes when a designer friend happened by and said this all reminded him of Greg Johnson's (direct from his Role-Playing Game of the Year award from *CGW* for *Starflight 2*) new **Sega** deal to develop an "off the wall" (why are we not surprised?) game called *Toejam and Earl*. It's a two-player game with a *Rogue/Gauntlet* perspective where two aliens have crashlanded on an insane planet where they are threatened by the dreaded nerd herd, killer ice cream truck and more.

He had no sooner spoken than a guy in an orc costume proceeded to approach an authentic four star general and say, "Great costume, man!". We couldn't help it. We immediately turned to each other and simultaneously say, "Do you think it's possible we're living in a **Sega** game?" N-a-a-a-ah! **CGW**

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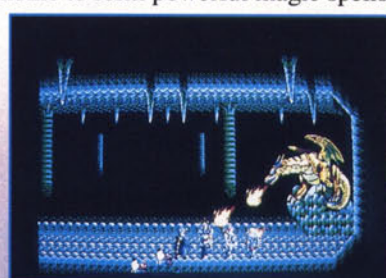
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Interplay's The Lord of the Rings

by Johnny L. Wilson

Gamers who not only recognize names like Bundushathur, Muzgash and Nanduhirion, but feel their pulses begin to race and their sense of curiosity rising whenever such nomenclature appears, have a fascinating treat in store for them when they discover the first adventure in **Interplay**'s new trilogy of role-playing games. Volume One of the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy is a dream come true for Interplay founder, Brian Fargo. Fargo's very first copy of a Tolkien novel still has extensive notes on turning the stories into a computer game. The design team didn't use those notes to make this game, though; too many years and the state of the art have passed them by.

This game hasn't been passed by, however. In fact, the company decided *not* to use any part of the name of the first novel in the trilogy because any part of the title, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, would have sounded too much like the earlier adventure game based on the Tolkien trilogy. *The Lord of the Rings* is intended to offer more role-playing challenges than any previous games based on the Tolkien licenses. Paul Jakeways, author of *The Dark Tower* role-playing module for the **Judges Guild**, and Scott Bennie, producer of the game, are primarily responsible for the game's design.

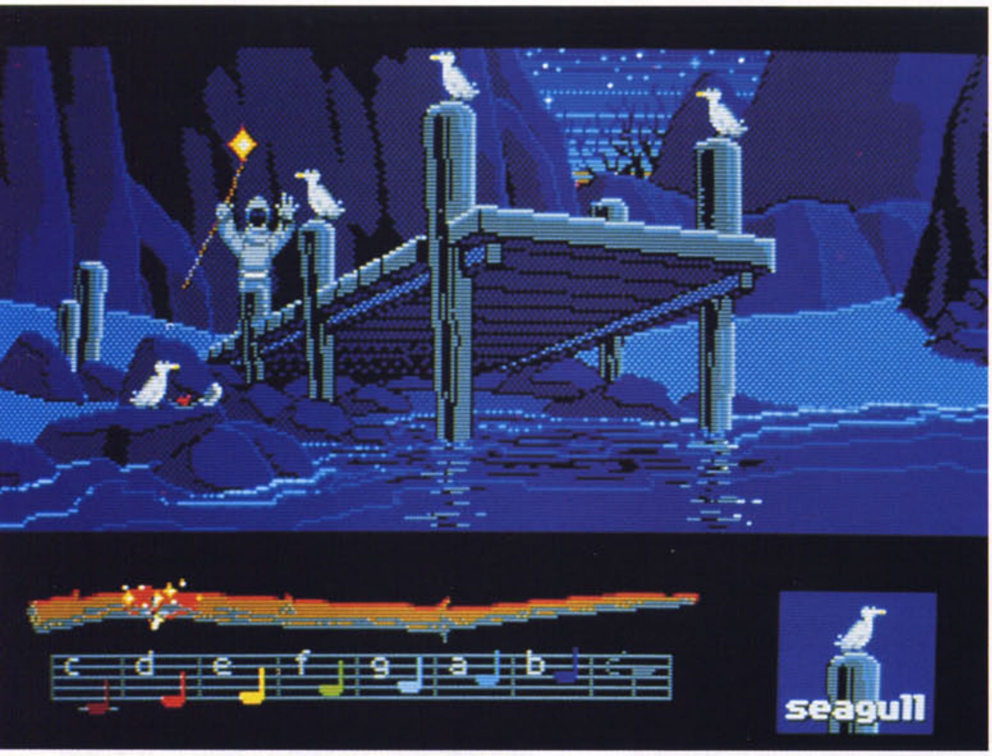
The game follows the book in a rather linear pattern, but true to Interplay's design philosophy, one can do plenty of diverging from the central path. As in the book, play begins with Frodo as an individual. Then, as Frodo, the player recruits more and more members of the party through exploration, puzzle-solving and smaller quests until the full nine-member fellowship is formed at Rivendell. The object of this particular game is to find out what has happened to Gandalf, avoid the Black Riders and form the fellowship.

"The World Of Woven Trees"

In Tolkien's novel, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, the party encounters a group of elves just prior to leaving the Shire. They are singing a song about Elbereth, Queen of the Western Seas, and almost every portion of the song is about her glorious beauty. Beauty is also the very first impression one gets of the graphic presentation in the Lord of the Rings game.

In the past, Interplay has been known for *The Bard's Tale*, *Wasteland* and *Dragon Wars* look. The screen is divided into "windows" which present animation, maps, inventories, character read-outs and menus. In the Lord of the Rings game, the viewpoint is full-screen. Not only is the introductory "cartoon" which sets up various sections of the story presented via the full screen, but the party of adventurers is seen from an overhead perspective as they travel over a colorful environment with all locations in constant scale. There are no windows to impede the aesthetic of viewing the action.

Of course, there must be an interface of some sort or the player has no way of communicating with the game. So, Interplay designed a "pop-up" interface. At any point in the game, a player who wants to offer direction to the quest can simply click on the right mouse button. When the player does this, the entire parchment full of active icons is displayed. From this display of icons, players may elect to participate in combat, check up on character statistics, pick up and/or use objects, use a skill, perform one of the two kinds of magic, hold four different types of conversations, rearrange the party or select another character's skills. The "pop-up" interface offers a welcome solution to many



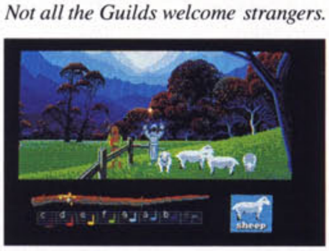
The game is fantasy. The interface is magic.

Alone on a craggy hilltop, high above an island shrouded in perpetual mist, your quest begins. But tread gingerly, because while the world of *Loom*™ is breathtakingly beautiful, unspeakable danger awaits the unsuspecting.

Trepidation soon gives way to bravado as you peek inside abandoned tents in the village. Stumbling over a discarded weaver's distaff, you watch in wonder as it gradually glows and resonates with a sequence of musical notes. Tentatively at first, you point the staff and repeat the notes. After considerable experimentation, you may discover the power to see in the dark. Or weave straw into gold. And eventually find the means to leave the island itself.



Not all the Guilds welcome strangers.



A spell weaver's power is not for the sheepish.

A fantastic odyssey ensues, as menacing waterspouts, merciless dragons and exotic cities draw you deeper and deeper into the fantasy. Armed with the distaff's magic power, you stride fearlessly across vast, cinematic landscapes. Seeking the arcane knowledge possessed by the Great Guilds, accumulated and refined since the dawn of time.

Typing is banished from this kingdom.

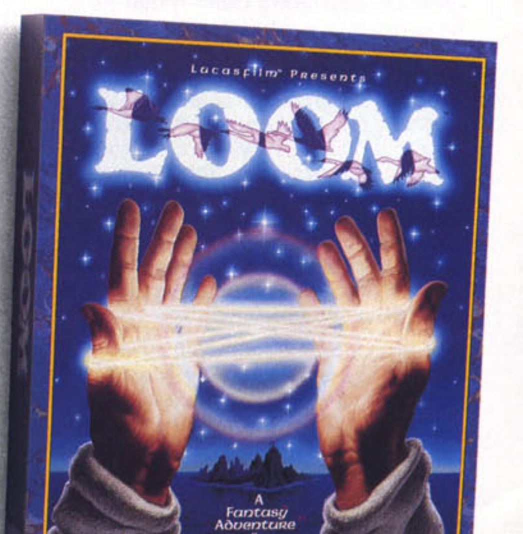
Loom is more than a masterpiece of fantasy storytelling. With *Loom,* Lucasfilm™ Games literally redefines the fantasy computer game experience. Simple point n' click actions move your character, select objects, and perform magic. No cumbersome keystrokes, text parsing, maze mapping, or inventory management intrude to break the spell.

We even transport you to the Age of the Great Guilds before you turn on the computer. With a lavishly produced, 30-minute drama on Dolby® Stereo audio cassette that's included with the game. Recorded by Lucasfilm's Academy Award-winning Sprocket Systems, it introduces the characters and sets the scene for the impending, epic struggle against imposing odds.

Then it's full immersion into *Loom*'s 3-Dimensional, scrolling panoramic landscape. Where detailed animation, high definition graphics, startling special effects and stirring musical score combine to create a total environment. Captivating you from the opening scene to the final climax.

And your quest for a truly magical fantasy adventure is finally realized.

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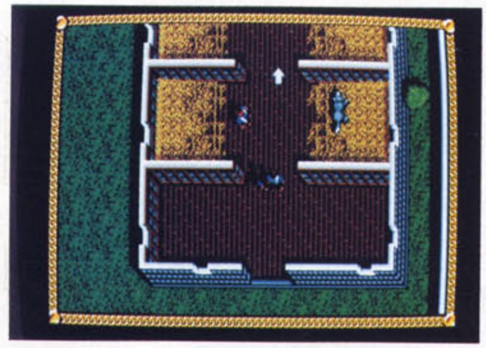
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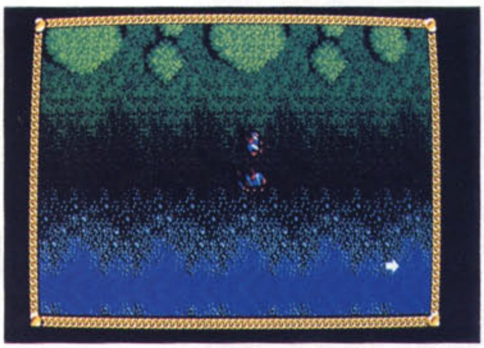
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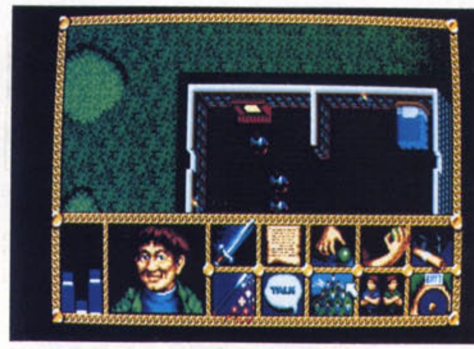
design problems and is most probably here to stay.

The adventure is divided into four general geographic areas which, in turn, feature distinctive purposes in the game design. The first area is The Shire. The Shire is designed as a tutorial area and contains a few mini-quests designed primarily to familiarize the player with the game system. This initial portion of the game offers some minor combat sequences and offers some foreshadowing regarding the plot.









The second area is Old Forest/Barrow Downs. This is a relatively straightforward section where the main challenge is solving a labyrinthine maze and encountering the spirits of the dead in Barrow Downs. Third, the party reaches the geographical locale between Bree and Weathertop. This is a section which is fairly true to the book, but adds a few new characters and a couple of surprises. Scott Bennie was extremely careful in adding plot elements, however. Whenever he and Paul wanted to add new elements to the story, Scott would go back to *The Silmarillion* to ascertain whether the proper names or common terms involved would look and sound authentic or not. The fourth area is simply called Beyond. It refers to the events at Rivendell where the party proper (nine adventurers) is formed and sets up the rest of the quest.

"Runes Of Power"

Toward the end of the novel, the party is experiencing a sense of depression in the dark land of Moria. Gimli, the dwarf, sings a song about his ancestor (the great Dwarven King Durin I) that mentions runes of power upon the door. Tolkien's magic is rare and mysterious compared to the abundance and accessibility found in most fantasy role-playing systems. So, to be true to the literary background, Interplay's design team decided to move away from some of the gaming conventions with regard to magic. They went so far as to suggest that Tolkien's magic was so weak by contemporary role-playing standards that a mediocre wizard in *many* fantasy games could have wasted Gandalf.

So, they designed a magic system which had *both* spells (which could be worked by wizards and magical creatures, but not by common folk) and words of power (which would be discovered by the characters throughout the course of the game). Words of power also appear mysteriously in a character's inventory, especially if the character has been talking to knowledgeable persons or magic creatures. So, players must check the character inventories on a regular basis.

Another departure from traditional role-playing game design involves the game's approach to treasure. *The Lord of the Rings* is *not* a "Monty Haul" adventure. Gold and valuable items are *not* the commodities necessary for success in this game. Rather, the emphasis of the game is on searching out information and sharing it with the right people. It is a game where one is definitely not rewarded for attacking first and asking questions later. Further, in order to provide the feeling of a "real" community, the design team elected to utilize less "set" encounters and allow the players to experience more random experiences.

Other factors in the game design are typical of Interplay's recent products. Puzzles have multiple solutions and there are plenty of off-line paragraphs to supplement the story line. Of course, there is some spin beyond the typical off-line paragraphs, however. Interplay's first Lord of the Rings game uses three types of lore: Elven lore, Numinorean lore and Hobbit lore. These tales, songs, and inscriptions are not only interesting and true to the Tolkien mythos, but they also assist the player's in diagnosing the purpose of artifacts and solving puzzles. Much of this lore can be found in the off-line paragraphs.

"A Lord of Wisdom"

In front of the fountain at Lorien, Frodo sang a dirge to Samwise Gamgee about the long-lost Gandalf. In that song, Gandalf is referred to as a lord of wisdom. In *The Lord of the Rings*, Interplay is moving away from the roots of computer role-playing in pure hack and slash and migrating toward a game design where discovery is the most important factor and "wisdom" (both inside and outside the boundaries of the game) is the result. To be sure, combat is still part of the design. It was part of the book. However, the goal of the game design is much more that of encouraging players to explore and discover the marvelous world of Middle Earth rather than destroy and pillage like many gamers did in *Wasteland*.

The risk of creating landscapes in computer games which are large enough to explore is that some areas will seem empty and purposeless. Indeed, there are "empty" spots in *The Lord of the Rings*, but the overall feeling is that there is also plenty to experience in the game. Finally, one thing is clear. The use of resplendent full-screen graphics and loving attention to the Tolkien lore means that in *The Lord of the Rings*, **Interplay** is out to forge one "Ring" game to rule them all.

CGW

"Books" Are *The Keys To Maramon*

by Alan Emrich



Imagine sitting down at the game table with your buddies, and one starts to deal out the cards. He calls the game as he deals, "Okay, five ante, deuces, aces and one-eyed faces wild, high-low split anaconda with a spit in the ocean, guts to open." If your response is "Huh?", then that's how I felt when trying out my first computer role-playing game. I wish I would have started with *The Keys to Maramon*.

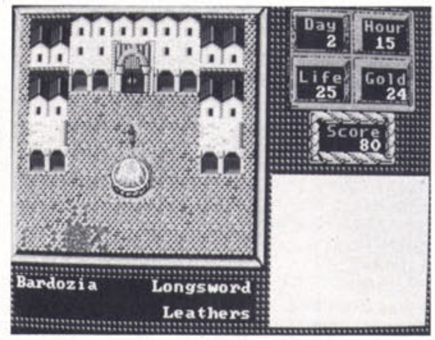
Oh, sure, I spent those hours kicking around *Might and Magic* and *Might and Magic II*, but those stories were so vast in their scope that it was beyond my endurance to *actually finish them*. While I did complete *The Bard's Tale*, it was only after my roommates became a cheering section every time the game was booted (They wanted to know how it ended, even when Yours Truly was ready to throw in the towel.). Since then, I have been pretty much burned out on this entire genre, especially with all of the map-making it often entails (I know, I know, auto-mapping was made for such as I, but I have been too fastidious in avoiding the entire genre to know what difference it has made). For me, it seemed better to "waste" my time playing epic wargames (at least, the maps are provided for *those*).

The Keys To Maramon, **Mindcraft**'s latest release (distributed through **Microprose** and the follow-up to their highly successful *Magic Candle*), changed all that. It really unlocked the entire genre of computer role-playing games for me. Thus, the nice thing about *Keys To Maramon* is that it is performing a "public service" for the computer role-playing genre by serving as a excellent recruitment tool in a market dominated by hard-core, epic-length adventure games.

Keys to the Kingdom (Features and Hints)

The first thing there is to like about *The Keys To Maramon* is that the documentation is light. It is not skimpy, mind you, but short and concise, with plenty left to be discovered by playing

Title:	The Keys to Maramon
System:	IBM
Price:	$49.95
Designers:	James B. Thomas Ali Atabek
Publisher:	Mindcraft
Distribution:	MicroProse Software Hunt Valley, MD



the game. In fact, if the copy protection wasn't based on key words in the documentation, you could almost lose the whole rules book and still enjoy *Keys* with very little handicap. About the most important thing to be learned from reading the documentation is to talk to the ship captain who brought the player to the island.

Keys enjoys all of the accoutrements of the role-playing genre. The player assumes the role of one of four heroes; the Huntsman, the Blacksmith, the Scholar or the King's Courier (the only female character). Each has four basic ratings for Speed (how fast they maneuver around the playing area, and in a "real time" game, that often makes considerable difference), Dexterity (a percentage chance of a single "killing stroke" when attacking a monster), Strength (how much damage is inflicted by non-killing strokes), and the usual Life Points (how long one's character will be around).

The player's character has a quest to fulfill, namely saving the town from the monsters who come out to sack it each evening. Naturally, final success hinges on cleaning out the catacombs beneath Maramon and confronting the usual "ultimate bad guy" who's responsible for all the trouble. (Won't these UBGs ever learn?)

Four critical elements are available to help the character in achieving this goal: weapons, armor, herbs and keys. The weapons available in the game provide a good selection of the usual swords, axes and hammers. These are melee weapons, which means the character must saunter up to monsters, look them in the eye and pound the space bar for all it's worth (both taking and inflicting damage in the process). The bows and arrows actually fire "ranged" missiles, so monsters can be hosed from a safer distance. (They still close awfully fast, though, so feel free to turn the "turbo" option on your IBM clone off when you play *Keys*). The down side about arrows is that the player can only pack 99 of them. Believe it or not, 99 shots can go pretty fast (especially after building up your space-bar-pounding reflexes). So then, it's back to trusty steel and iron to do the job (Even these suffer wear and tear, though, so they need to be constantly resharpened—for a fee, of course).

Also, some magic weaponry is available. Fire Globes are land mines which are dropped around town. When a monster steps

on one, BOOM, no more monster. However, it is possible for careless adventurers to step on their *own* Fire Globes and lose several Life Points in the process. The real pain is that these globes are hard to see once placed (or else the monsters wouldn't step on them, right?). Also ready for one's arsenal are the Ice, Flame and Fear wands (the former two firing damage at range, the latter holding a monster in its place for a time). These are expensive weapons, however. While the Scholar has the best magic skills rating of the four characters, the others seem to fare better with cheaper, and easier to wield, steel.

The armor is the usual leather, ring mail, chainmail, and steel plate. Upscale suits include methreal (as opposed to mithral) and, if found while dungeon delving, pearl armor (all the snappy dressers know that Maramon is *famous* for its pearls). There are no penalties, apparently, for wearing heavier armor, so batten down, button up and battle through.

Cooking With Magic

As in *The Magic Candle*, "magiks" in the game revolve around herbs and mushrooms. Fortunately, in the heat of battle or when preparing to turn a dangerous dungeon corner, the player can slam the "U" key and "use" a magic mushroom. Depending on the flavor, they will increase a player's basic statistics or up the armor class (all with a temporary effect, so pack a big lunch). The vital herbs and potions are the ones which, naturally, restore Life Points. Yes, the medical mushroom and band-aid brew are the difference between the reckless new role-player charging into certain doom and charging into nearly fatal *almost* certain doom.

Another key to *Keys* are keys. The player starts with a key to the strongrooms (where fitful rest is available and goodies can, occasionally, be found). Access to the catacombs below hinges on collecting other keys, each of ever more precious metal. The better the key, the further the access. One will have quite an extensive key ring before confronting the Ultimate Bad Guy.

The real heart of the game is not for the player to collect the Friday paycheck from the mayor. It is, instead, to become an avid reader. For every 1,000 experience points, the proper book can be "read" from the closed stacks in order to gain a statistics point for a basic attribute. By simply shelling out some big bucks, the rare book room can be visited for some major clues and aids to the player. Be sure to take a few notes when spending time in the rare book room. Everything learned there will make a lot of sense towards the end of the adventure.

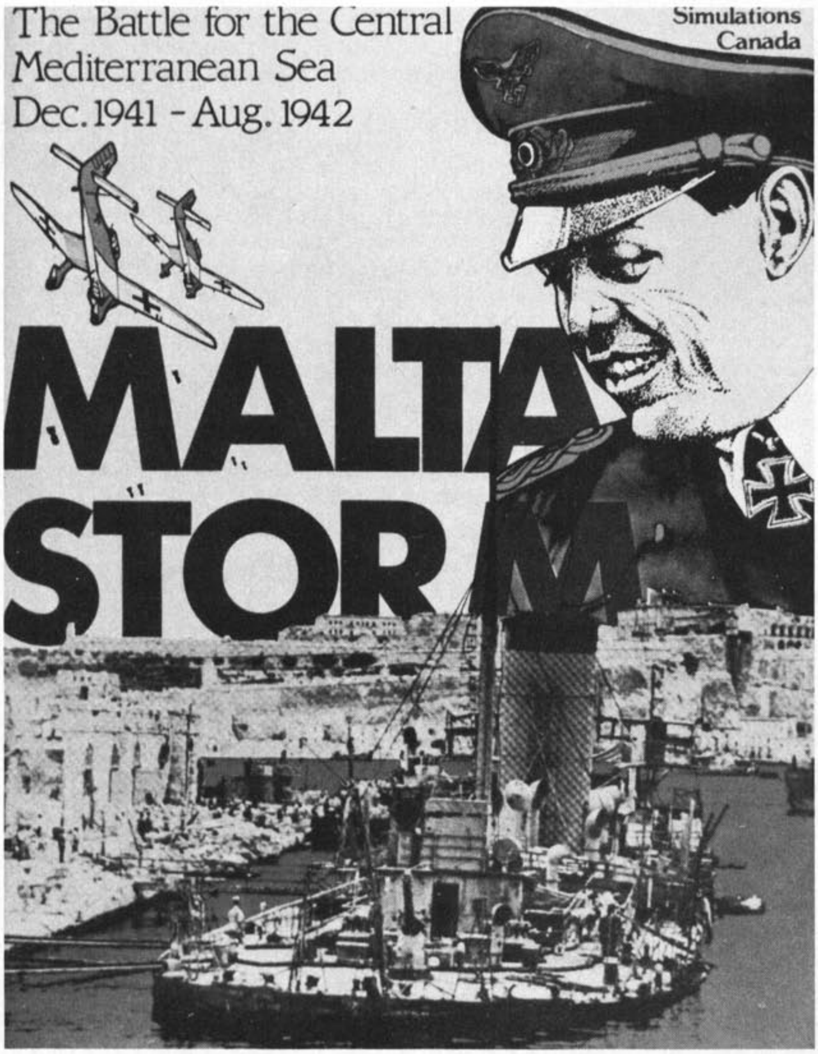
Key Buy (Conclusion)

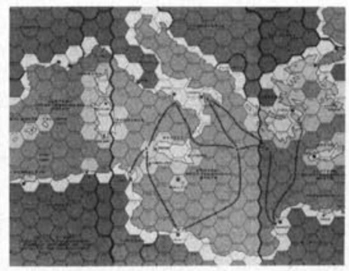
In considering whether to purchase *The Keys to Maramon* or not, you should note that I am not Scorpia. Not only does this work to my girlfriend's advantage, but it also makes me the right market for *The Keys of Maramon*. Spending about 5-6 enjoyable hours playing this game has left a pleasant taste on the old gaming palette, and a fond memory of good, crisp role-playing adventure. *Keys* is **not** an epic quest for the jaded adventurer (some might consider this a cheese puff when they really wanted steak). Some may feel that this is simply too short a game for the price (conceivably $10 per hour of gaming pleasure). It *is*, however, a manageable quest for new adventurers with a compelling "gotta-play-it-straight-through" quality to it. Which often means that after five straight hours of *The Keys to Maramon*, you'll need to find one last key, the key to the rest room! **CGW**

Storm In The Mediterranean

Simulations Canada's Malta Storm

by Sam Punnett





TITLE:	Malta Storm
SYSTEM:	IBM, Atari ST, Amiga
REVIEWED:	IBM
PLAYERS:	0-2
PRICE:	$60.00
DESIGNER:	Robert Crandall
PUBLISHER:	Simulations Canada P.O. Box 452 Bridgewater, NS CANADA, B4V 2XS

Malta Storm is a recent release by **Simulations Canada** covering the World War II Axis effort to subdue the British bastion on the island of Malta in the central Mediterranean. Malta boasts the finest deep water harbor in the Mediterranean and was the pre-war home of the British Mediterranean Fleet. Its airbases and location made it the cornerstone base for interdicting Axis supply lines to Rommel's forces in North Africa. At the same time, tiny Malta itself was heavily reliant on convoy delivered supply to keep it vital and was perilously situated only 30 minutes flying time from Axis air armadas in Sicily. These conditions set the stage for an epic conflict in the struggle to control the Mediterranean theater early in the war.

SimCan's game treatment establishes the player's role at the strategic decision-making level. The Allied player must keep Malta supplied and reinforced while, at the same time, attempting to interrupt the flow of supplies on their way to North Africa. The Axis is faced with suppressing and, perhaps, storming Malta while ferrying life blood supplies to the Afrika Korps.

Decisions are taken in light of the National Priorities menu which emulate the aims of the Allied and Axis central commands. It is the ordering of the five National Priorities that predetermines the combat roles of the various air, sea, and land units that make up the player's combat groups. Combat roles determine the actions units within groups take within a game turn. These actions are: Reacting to enemy actions within a groups area of influence; Striking at enemy bases; launching Superiority missions; Transporting supply or relocating to friendly bases; and Escorting transporting or striking units.

The player exercises some operational control through the expenditure of Command Span Limitation points (CSL's) applied to individual units. It is the CSL's that are the crux of player control in the game. They allow the player to reorientate unit actions preset by the national priorities and, in the process, fix a level of determination of effort with which the unit will undertake the action. These actions in turn affect the levels of supply available to a group for further actions on later turns.

The rulebook is little help in describing to the player just how one is to go about reordering the national priorities. To quote the section dealing with it, " . . . this (changing national priorities) is the heart of the game from the player viewpoint, so careful use of this function is advised." I found out how to do it quite by accident and was bemused by the exercising of the "Command Override Option" that followed, of which there is no description in the rules at all. It also might have been helpful to provide a written description of the units involved in the game. While the game admittedly will appeal to a select audience to begin with, it would be helpful to know just what MC200s and Marylands are, so that the player could be sure of action allocations.

For those who are unaware, **Simulations Canada** products make no attempt at graphic representation. The design philosophy avoids pretty pictures and artistic on-screen maps in favor of a number crunching menu, text, list and report format. Players who are less interested in the command experience

(Continued on page 73)



THE KEYS TO MARAMON™
Maramon Library
What will Lumelia do?
Study Talk Keys Check
Quit Hold Use Xit
Day 2 Hour 16
Life 35 Gold 37
Score 225
Lumelia greets Timothy Quint.
"Hello, Lumelia," replies the librarian. "Feel free to study anything you wish."
Lumelia Longsword
Ring Mail
Hornbern Flamewand
27 Charges
7 Monsters Ring Mail
Stavros Hammer
No Armor
Welcome to Maramon!
Now Get to Work!
Every night, hordes of horrible monsters emerge from the Dark Towers of Maramon!
You—a hardy blacksmith, wily huntsman, graceful courier or clever scholar—have been hired to slay them. Night after night after night.
More than that, you must use your wits to discover where they come from, track them to their source, and end the slaughter once and for all!
Feverish action and fascinating role–playing from Mindcraft, the makers of The Magic Candle™!
MINDCRAFT
To order, see your retailer or call Mindcraft at (800) 525–4933, 9 AM to 5 PM Pacific Time.
Screen photos from IBM/Compatible EGA version. Other versions vary.
Prices: IBM/Tandy/Compatible $49.95. Commodore 64/128 $39.95
Circle Reader Service # 10

Art and State-of-the-Art Are Not Synonymous

Reflections on the 1990 Computer Game Developers' Conference

In three years of observing the evolution of the Computer Game Developers' Conference, it has grown from a tiny circle of visionary idealists into a larger pluralistic community of pragmatists, technicians, commercially oriented craftsmen, theoreticians and (dare we say it) artists. The agenda has expanded from talking about games, what makes them good and how to make them better to talking about the future, ethical and emotional impact, socializing potential, and transformational goals of computer games. Where we spoke of the blatant mercenary atmosphere of last year's conference, this year offered a broader perspective over the overriding money questions of the previous year.

To be sure, these developers are concerned about making their livings (and/or fortunes), but they are also concerned about their *art*. In fact, one presentation discussed some of the issues of art versus commercialism.

Art Versus Commercialism

Robert Gehorsam of the **PRODIGY interactive personal service** began the presentation with an illustration about Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*. The publisher of the book was allegedly so convinced of the importance of this book that he was willing to lose up to $100,000 in order to get it on the market. Instead, circa $10 million later, it is considered a "monster-selling" book and spawned a very successful film version. Gehorsam noted that one does not always have to choose between art and commercialism.

Robert went on to define art as a creative media that changes those who encounter it and a personal expression that communicates. Then, he noted that it is "history" that will ultimately



determine what art actually is. Bringing his major point home, he noted that the question is not whether business is good for *art*, but whether *art* is good for business.

Then, he opened up the possibility that art *would* be good for business because an older and more sophisticated audience is now consuming leisure products. Thus, the products must be *better* in order to convert this discriminating audience.

Next, Eric Goldberg suggested that the industry is evolving to a point where game design will play more and more of a role and the technical services within the industry will enhance and support the design function. In suggesting ways that publishing computer game software is becoming an art, he cited firms like **MicroProse, Lucasfilm** and **Interplay** that feature limited product lines but have made a commitment to continual innovation. In citing ways to bring the computer game art to the masses, he cited **Nintendo** as an opportunity.

The Artist's Role in Game Design

In order to help computer games be perceived as art, publishers have brought creative specialists into the development process. One roundtable was led by **Mediagenic** design artist, Hilary Mills Lambert (*Tongue of the Fatman, Face-Off, Ghostbusters,* and *Pitfall II*, among others). Hilary believes that the graphic artists need to be brought into the design/development process as soon as possible. She prefers to be part of the brainstorming process in the early stages of the design. This enables her to consider the visuals necessary to the success of a product prior to the point of executing thumbnail sketches.

For example, Lambert once needed some ideas on how to make a "Transformer"-type mechanoid work. She went to a standard photographic reference work on movement and photocopied individual pictures depicting the walk of an ostrich. Then, she used these photocopies as individual frames for a crude animation sequence, made the frames larger, put tissues over her copies, scanned the tissues themselves and studied the movement when making her animation. Scanning in pictures that are different than the exact look one is going for and using them as a model is extremely efficient.

Next, Lambert stressed that computer artists need to be machine-format literate. They must be flexible in approaching target machines and be certain that they are using the right software in order for programmers to access data at a later date. Some examples she gave referred to the inability of NTSC monitors connected to game machines to display colors higher than twelve or lower than one and the fact that on **Sega** machines, *every* color acts differently when it is adjacent to another color (e.g. a dark pixel next to a white pixel gives one a rainbow effect). To avoid problems, she tries to figure out "laws" for each different machine and works with three different monitors at once (a black and

(Continued on page 36)



Before the LAPC-1 Music Card

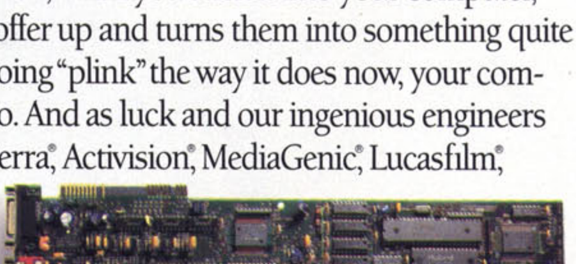


After the LAPC-1 Music Card

Actual results may vary.

If we were you, we sure as heck wouldn't run out and buy an LAPC-1 without knowing something about what it does. So if you give us a moment, we'll tell you.

The LAPC-1 is a music synthesizer card which, when you stick it into your computer, takes the pitifully anemic sounds computer games offer up and turns them into something quite extraordinary. Or, to put it another way, instead of going "plink" the way it does now, your computer will go "KA-PHLOOM" the way it's supposed to. And as luck and our ingenious engineers would have it, it'll do all this with the games from Sierra®, Activision®, MediaGenic®, Lucasfilm®, Access®, MicroProse®, and nearly everybody else.



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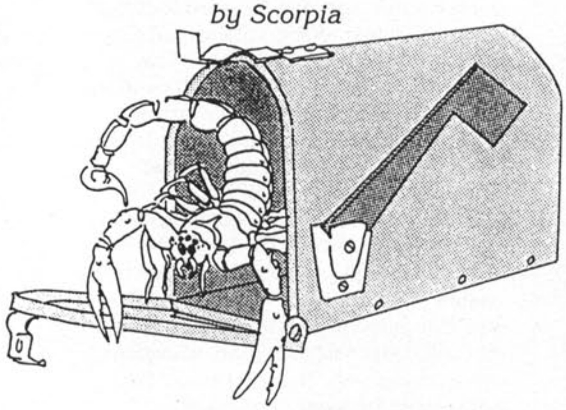
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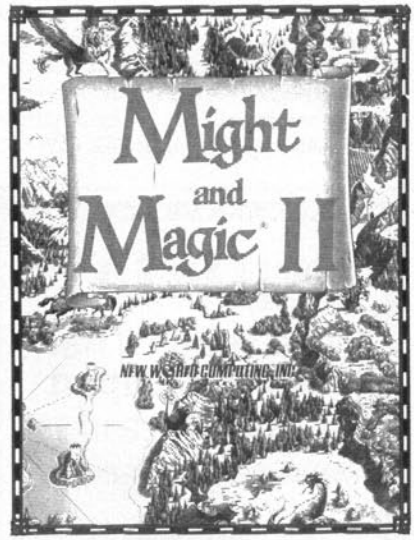
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Circle Reader Service # 18

Scorpion's Mail

by Scorpia









Yes, it's that time again. Time to take a safari into the back room, and hunt through the mail sack jungle for some big game. Well, maybe you'll have to settle for some hints instead. The room isn't quite big enough for lions and gazelles, not to mention elephants and giraffes (grin).

Mail delivery in general seems to have improved a bit over the last couple of months or so. Letters are now arriving in my box in more reasonable time, although there is still the occasional tardy missive that takes over a week to reach me. Most of them, though, are getting here quickly.

Some people think I'm kidding about the stacks of mail. Ha! *You* keep seven years' worth of reader mail around, and see how much *you* have. It's all over the place, stuffed into boxes and plastic bags, shoved into closets and on top of bookcases . . . and the letters keep coming and I'm running out of room (even Fred is beginning to grumble a bit). Maybe it's time to dump some of the older ones, at that.

Anyway, that's my problem, not yours, and it's time we got to your problems. After all, that's why you're here in the stacks in the first place. So let's reach into the bag and see what comes up.

Hero's Quest: Several readers are concerned about the skills of their characters. They've figured out one way of solving a puzzle, but the type of character they have lacks the necessary skill. Don't worry about it! Remember, each class of character has different abilities and *all* of them come with what *they* need to solve any puzzle. Also, many of the puzzles were designed to have multiple solutions to begin with. The more familiar you become with your character's skills, the better you will be able to use them to get you through the game.

Dragon Wars: A number of people are having trouble getting away from it all, or at least from the known world. They've been everywhere on the map, but they know there has to be more, especially since there are some things they haven't been able to do or find yet. Well, you need some transportation, and there's only one kind that can take you across water. Yep, you need to do something about those pirates. Speaking of which, if you haven't been able to get in to even talk to them, you might be overlooking a certain skill. One of the original four party members comes with it. Check 'em out, and see if you can discern the useful one in this circumstance. Finally, yes, there will be a *Dragon Wars II*. it is being worked on even as I write this. However, it doesn't look too likely that it will make the Christmas market.

Knights of Legend: Some folks are looking for the arena. You'd think that the weapons trainers could tell you where it is, or that at least there would be a handy sign saying "This way to the arena!". Nope, it's stuck out there and you have to stumble across it on your own. Either that, or read further on to find out that it's located about halfway up the road to Htron, just west off the road.

The Magic Candle: If you're having trouble with the final ritual to restore the candle, maybe you overlooked (or didn't find out about) standing in the right places in the room. Only three people are needed to perform the ritual, so make sure they have all the special items needed. Then, walk them around and keep an eye on the floor.

Might and Magic II: For those who may be having difficulties with completing the arena sequence to see the queen,

here is some important information: you must do all your combats (on the black ticket) and visit the queen, with exactly the same party members. Don't add or drop anyone in between. Many thanks to Brian Smith for discovering this little item.

Ultima V: Finding the Amulet in the Underworld can be quite a task, as some people have discovered. The trick is to start your journey from the right place. A whirlpool, for instance. Be sure to bring plenty of gems, as the underground river system can be a bit tricky to follow. In regard to going on quests for the various shrines, remember that you must do these quests one at a time. Visit a shrine, go to the Codex, and return to that shrine, before going on to another one (else the game becomes confused..and so will you!). Down in the bottom level of dungeon Deceit, some people have been unable to reach the ladder beyond the wall. You have to find the hidden lever that will open part of it (and, of course, reveal monsters). The torches on the walls might be worth looking at.

Ultima VI: Folks, forget about the ghost. You can't solve the murder. You might have a good idea of who's guilty, but there's nothing you can do about it. Quentin is just so much window dressing, sorry to say. Moving from ghosts to crypts, several people have been unable to find the catacombs of Moonglow. Have you been to Xiao's yet? Beyond a door in her place is the ladder to the burial site. For those who need to get their yew log cut, there is a sawmill just outside Minoc where the work can be done, at reasonable cost. Finally, Raj Iyes writes to say that there is a use for the Reveal spell, after all. The floor traps I mentioned in my article on *Ultima VI* are actually invisible! So, if you cast Reveal on these traps, you will then be able to move them or Vanish them without setting them off. Thanks, Raj! (Gee, I wish I'd known that before)

That seems to be it for this peek into the mailbag. Remember, if you need help with an adventure game, you can reach me in the following ways:

On *Delphi*: Stop by the GameSIG (under the Groups and Clubs menu). On *GEnie*: Visit the Games RoundTable (type: Scorpia to reach the Games RT). By US Mail (Enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you live in the United States): Scorpia, PO Box 338, Gracie Station, New York, NY 10028.

Until next time, happy adventuring!

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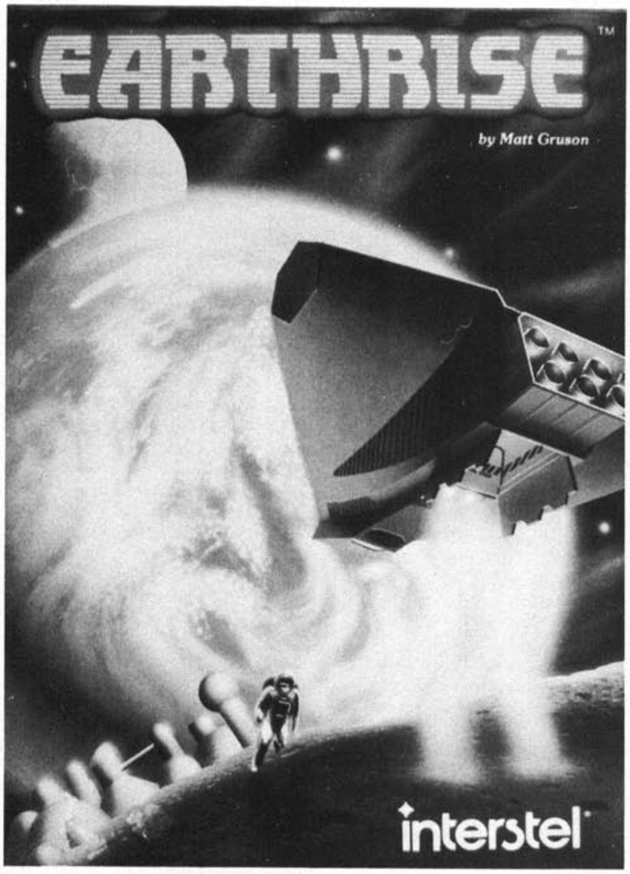
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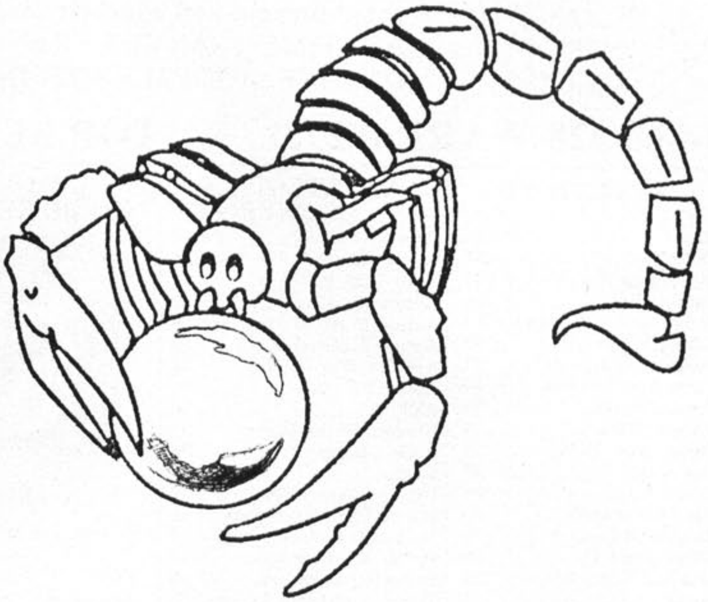
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Scorpion's View

Interstel's Earthrise

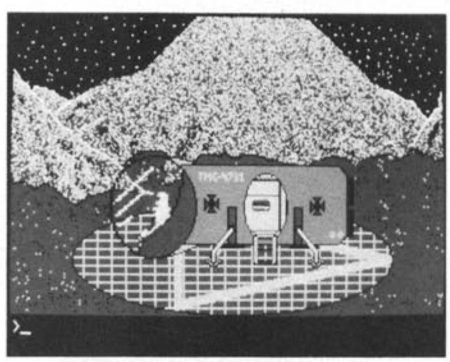
As told by Scorpia

Scorpia is an experienced and respected adventure game expert. CGW is pleased to be able to provide this forum for her distinctive and, sometimes, controversial perspective.

Clink . . . slide . . . roll . . . clink . . . slide . . . clink. Gotcha! Whew! You have no idea how hard it is to hold a crystal ball in your pincers. Slippery stuff, crystal. Especially when it's round. Getting a grip on it is not easy! However, the game I see in the ball this time is *definitely* easy.

That, in a way, is a little depressing. Preceded by *Loom*, *Conquests of Camelot*, and *Circuit's Edge*, *Earthrise* is the fourth entry-level adventure in a row, this summer. Perhaps that's just coincidence or perhaps the game companies (like the film makers) believe that people don't want to strain their brains during the hot months.

Either way, the adventure fare so far this season has definitely been on the lightweight side. Which is not to say I am *against* easy games. They are great for beginning players, the occasional player who prefers a game that won't take months to complete, and even for the experienced adventurer who wants a little



vacation, now and then, from the more mind-bending products. It's just that four in a row, with nothing meatier in between, gets to be a bit much. With that said, we can now look deeper into the crystal for an examination of *Earthrise* from **Interstel**.

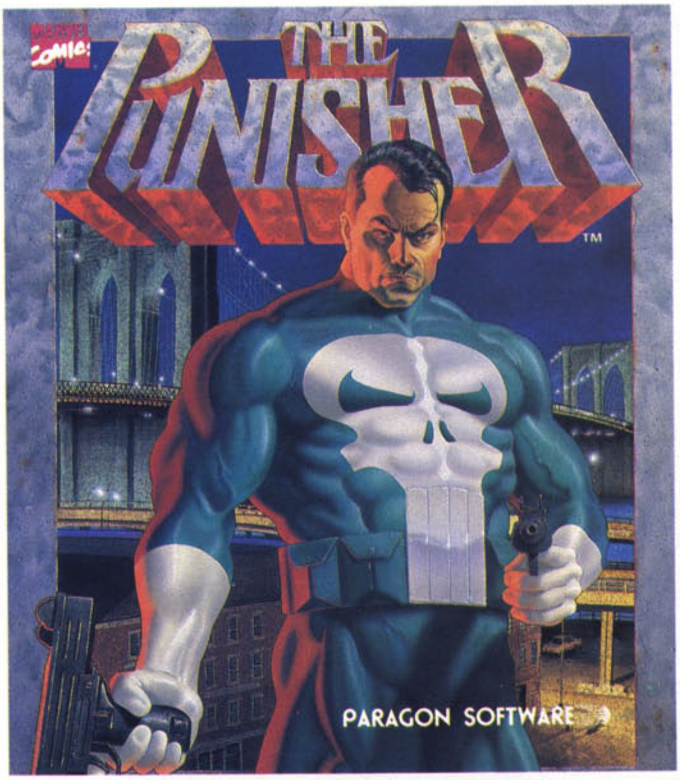
It is the not-too-distant future, and an asteroid is on its way to Earth. This chunk of rock has been carefully chosen for its mining possibilities, and the idea is to put it in orbit around our world to make operations easier (not to mention cutting down on the travel time). A mining installation and powerful engines have been built on the asteroid and off it goes.

All is well, until suddenly frantic calls for help from the asteroid personnel are received on Earth, followed by ominous silence. Even worse, the asteroid navigating systems are no longer making the necessary course corrections; unless something is done quickly, the asteroid is going to smash right into the home planet. That could be painful.

A troubleshooter is, therefore, sent off to see what's happened on the asteroid. Guess who's volunteered? Right, you have! A shuttle is prepared and before you can say "launch", you're in orbit around the mining colony.

Fortunately, you don't have to worry about any fancy space piloting. You just push a button and the computers do all the hard work (and they do it well, too). All you need to worry about is the situation inside the mining complex.

In some ways, the game is reminiscent of *Stationfall*: strangely empty rooms and corridors, with not a person to be seen. No bodies, either, except for one in the lab, and a couple of empty space



With a Name Like That, Don't Expect Mr. Nice Guy

They call me The Punisher, and that should tell you all you need to know. Members of organized crime killed my family and got away with it. I'm settling the score.

I work in Manhattan, where a clandestine group pays me to fight crime my way. I'm a professional vigilante, and many people consider me a hero.

But I've got enemies. One of them is seven feet tall and weighs 450 pounds. His name is Kingpin, and he controls organized crime in Manhattan. I've terminated his best assassins time and time again — but the fat man has always eluded me.

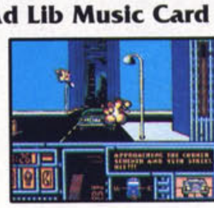
Until now. I've just been offered a chance to nail Kingpin himself.

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suits (wondering how they got that way gives rise to all sorts of unpleasant thoughts).

Obviously, exploration and investigation are the orders of the day. The surface area of the asteroid is small and easily mapped. This should not be neglected, as there are some things you will need to do up there, and knowing how to get to different places quickly is helpful.

You also want to find the way in as soon as possible, since your air supply is limited and the trip from the shuttle rapidly depletes it. Once you've been down below and recharged your tank, you can return to the surface later to map it out (and no, do not go walking into the sea!).

The interior of the complex is also simple to map. It consists of two levels, each with an eight-way junction leading off to different rooms. You don't even need to do a detailed map here; drawing an octagon for each level, and labelling the sides accordingly, is sufficient. The corridors always lead straight on, and there are no mazes or other devious passages to worry about.

Since the installation is a pressurized environment (asteroids are not noted for having atmosphere), you must look at the airlock doors carefully before you go waltzing through. Some rooms and passageways have become depressurized and walking into them without your helmet on leads to a quick, albeit amusing, death.

In fact, there are many interesting ways to die, all of them thoughtfully illustrated for your edification. Nothing drives the point home better than watching as: you fry yourself with a laser, your head explodes in a vacuum, an alien porcupine turns you into Swiss cheese, or you tear a hole in your suit and go zipping off into space (whee!), among others. You get the idea: be careful.

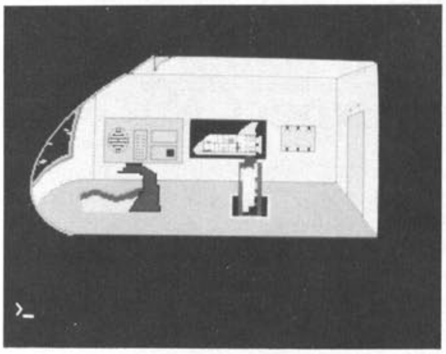
Speaking of alien porcupines, it won't be long before you find out that a number of unearthly critters are the main reason for the depopulation of the mining complex. As you might expect, they are all over the place, getting in your way, blocking you from important locations, and being, in general, distinctly unhelpful.

Therefore, much of the game is focused on removing these creatures, one way or another. Fortunately, they don't move around, and in most (but not all) cases, if you happen to come across one, you have time to execute a quick about-face and get away before something unpleasant happens to you.

Each of these little darlings has a special weakness, which you must exploit in order to get rid of it. Information on this and other important matters can be found in the complex itself. Read everything you can get your hands on.

One creature, however, you must figure out for yourself. That's the giant spider lurking in the gardens. It's nothing more than a somewhat overgrown variety of common spider, but certainly large enough to make your life both difficult and short. The solution to this problem can be found above ground.

When all the obstacles have been removed, you can get on with your main mission, which is repairing the damage to the navigational systems. This is a simple affair, provided you have collected all the necessary parts, pieces, and tools. Most of those are in plain sight, or otherwise obvious if you look around.



Then, it's just a matter of firing up the systems, getting back to your pod (hint: look before you leap) and returning to your shuttle and Earth, where you can bask in the glow of a laudatory report on your success before the next mission comes along.

In general, *Earthrise* is a clean, simple game with logically-constructed puzzles and a humorous touch. While it has a science orientation, you don't have to be a scientist to figure things out; a little basic knowledge and common sense are really all you need.

The one place where you might have problems, however, is with the parser. There are several instances where you know what you want to do (and that it's the right thing to do), but phrasing the command so the game accepts it can lead to some frustration. Trial and error is your only recourse in these situations.

Graphics are unspectacular, but adequate. The best animation sequences tend to be when you come to an untimely end (you might want to save the game and die deliberately every so often just to see these).

One of the nicer features is the ability to define "macro keys" for often-used commands. The game comes standard with several of them (for instance, one to wear your helmet and one to take it off), and you can add others of your own choice. One that you certainly want to create is "push button", since you do a lot of that throughout the installation.

Movement of your character (a full-sized figure, in the **Sierra** style) is accomplished with the number pad. Commands are entered by simply starting to type on the keyboard (or using a macro key); this can be done even while in motion (although it is usually better to stop, so you don't walk into trouble inadvertantly).

The game keeps a numerical score of how well you're doing, and it's a good idea to check this out now and then to gauge your progress. However, a perfect score isn't necessary to finish (I completed it with less than the full 800 points). Some actions provide points, but have no other function. For instance, picking up several items from the crew quarters gives you points, but these items have no use in the game.

Saving can be done anywhere at almost any time and you have fifteen save positions to use. These can be given short descriptions, which is handy when the time comes to restore; no need to guess which anonymous letter or number is the one you want.

Overall, then, *Earthrise* is more a game for the beginning player, but it can also provide an afternoon's diversion for the more experienced.

That's about it for this look into the crystal. Remember, if you need help with an adventure game, you can reach me in the following ways:

On Delphi: visit the GameSIG (under the Groups and Clubs menu). On GEnie: Stop by the Games RoundTable (type: Scorpia to reach the Games RT). By US Mail (enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you live in the United States): Scorpia, PO Box 338, Gracie Station, New York, NY 10028.

Until next time, happy adventuring!

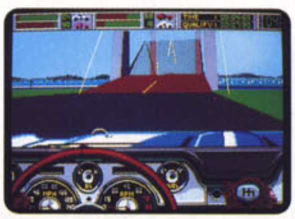
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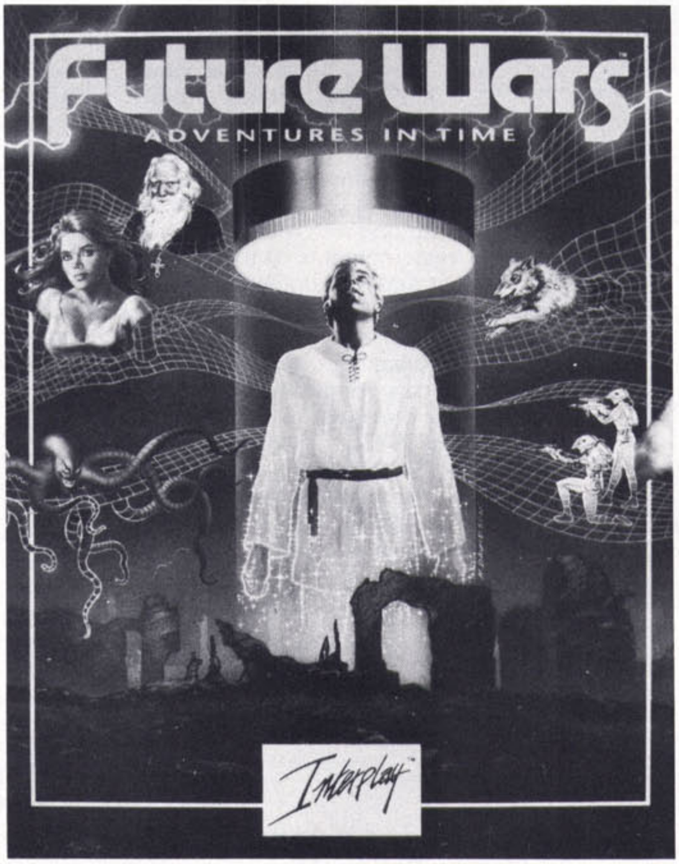

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Transformed after his defeat of the Balrog into Gandalf the White, he would now contend with Saruman as well.
Gandalf
System Requirements: IBM PC, true IBM compatibles. DOS 2.1 or higher. 512K RAM, MCGA, VGA, EGA or Tandy graphics card. 5.25" and 3.5" disks available. Amiga and Atari STE. Mouse optional. Ad Lib card support.
The program is published with the cooperation of the Tolkien Estate and their publishers, George Allen & Unwin (Publishers) Ltd. The plot of Riders of Rohan, the characters of the Hobbits, and the other characters from the Lord of the Rings are copyright George Allen & Unwin (Publishers) Ltd 1966, 1974, 1979, 1981. All brand names and trademarks are the property of their respective holders. Spinnaker is a registered trademark of the Spinnaker Software Corporation. ©1990 Spinnaker Software Corp.
Circle Reader Service # 22

Interplay's *Future Wars*

The Transportation System at the End of the Universe

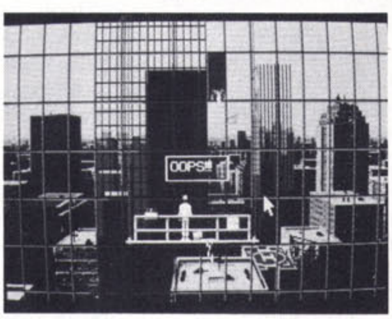
by Allen L. Greenberg

TITLE: Future Wars: Adventures In Time
SYSTEMS: Amiga, Atari ST, IBM
REVIEWED: Amiga
PRICE: $49.95
PUBLISHER: Delphine Software
DISTRIBUTOR: Interplay Productions



The Time Traveller (for so it will be convenient to speak of him) was expounding upon the matter of washing windows. He was, in fact, a window-washing wimp; not at all what one would describe as a hero. It was his inquisitiveness regarding what lay behind the windows he was servicing, as well as his childish (though entertaining) sense of pranksterism, which led to his discovery of the time-travel apparatus. Shortly, he would find himself caught up in inter-temporal intrigue, mystery and mayhem.

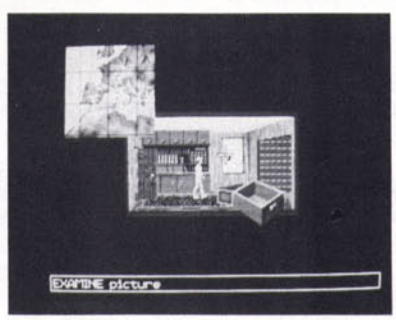
Future Wars: Adventures in Time is an animated graphic adventure in which the player travels through several eras in time in order to save the Earth from a group of aliens called "Crughons" (not to be confused with "croutons," although they frequently are). The well-crafted story unfolds linearly and features, in addition to time travel, a very touchy gathering of monks in the past, a perilous public transportation system of the future, and an enemy fortress—somewhere, somewhen. The puzzles are essentially of the object-manipulation type and there are some action sequences to challenge the player, as well.



Similar in many respects to the **Sierra** games (such as *Space Quest III*), *Future Wars* features a new, mouse-driven interface which the publishers call "Cinematique." This system requires neither any typing nor use of anything other than the mouse to play the game. The Time Traveller is moved about the graphic screen by placing the cursor on a desired destination and clicking the mouse. Other commands are initiated by clicking on the second mouse button, which brings up a window of verbs. The command is completed by clicking on an object on the graphic screen. The action of a verb from the verb-window, and its subsequent results, depends on the particular surroundings and objects available at the time it is used.

This form of issuing orders will please the player who is looking forward to throwing aside his or her thesaurus and dictionary, having long been intimidated by uncomprehending and uncaring parsers. However, the graphic screens are filled with much detail and important objects are frequently hidden. Thus begins a pixel-by-pixel search for minute objects and irregularities on screen which are vital to solving the game. Far-sighted, color-blind or otherwise visually impaired adventurers will definitely find themselves at a disadvantage in *Future Wars*.

The graphics are generally very imaginative and at times absolutely striking. Most scenes are constructed with bright colors and vivid detail in addition to some subtle shadings and nuances. Animation, not only of the main characters but of the background as well, is wonderful. The story unfolds in a variety of scenes which range from cramped, thumbnail-sized rooms to vast, panoramic views of a future skyline or ancient forest. Of course, this tremendous amount of graphic minutiae makes even more difficult those pursuits for the seemingly insignificant flecks which are actually features necessary to complete the game.

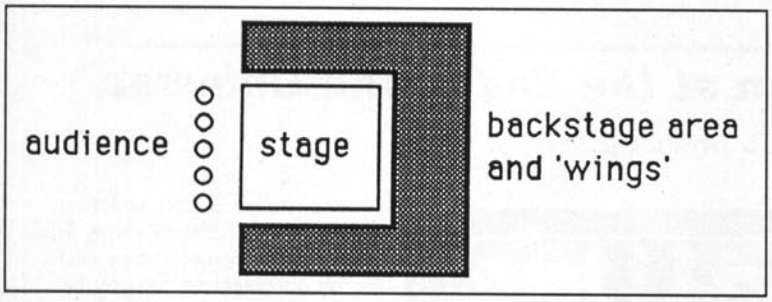


Some limited sequences of the program take place in real time. Here, commands must be given at rapid-fire pace in order for the Time Traveller to progress or merely survive. There are also

(Continued on page 59)

CGD Conference

(Continued from page 24)



white television, old color television and regular monitor).

Finally, Lambert assessed the computer artist's contribution to the genre as being fourfold. First, artists "flesh out" characterization. Second, they create a mood with the backgrounds. Third, they assist the illusion of "life" through emulating body movement. Fourth, they offer movement, focus and direction through the techniques of animation.

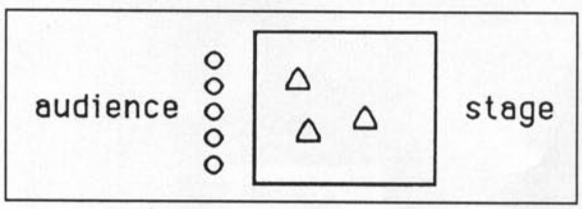
Existential WYSIWYG

Remember Flip Wilson's "Geraldine" character? "What you see is what you get," was one of "her" favorite lines. It is also, in the acronym used in this section's title, one of the favorite buzzwords of the computer industry. Brenda Laurel observed in the paper prepared as a background for her conference on interface design that what computer users *think* they see is not necessarily what they *actually* get.

After talking about inadequate models for a computer interface, her paper moved to the analogy of theater. She observed that while traditional proscenium theaters have a backstage area and wings where technicians work and actors wait off-stage, audiences are only aware of what is actually happening on the stage itself. Using this analogy, gamers would not be aware of all that is happening "behind" the action, they would simply be members of the audience who have a greater influence in helping the action unfold than a conventional audience.

Laurel noted that, in the past, she had argued that the gamer was like a member of the audience who marched up onto the stage and became a member of the cast. However, she recognized that this is a confusing analogy. As in the avant-garde theatrical events of the sixties when audience members *did* join the plays, the stage can certainly become cluttered. The result is that the play becomes confused and the plot degenerates. It is no longer a play with passive observers.

Yet, this may be what needs to happen. The stage and staging must disappear. The perception of the stage, i.e. the computer or computer-generated environment, allows the gamer to become so much one with it that the simulated environment is all that matters. Whether that environment is created by hardware, software or wetware is of no consequence. The important factor is breaking down the technological barriers so that the gamer's perspective is changed. Laurel calls this existential WYSIWYG. As in the figure with the oval, the triangular "agents" (human or simulated) relate to the strange-shaped objects in a representational environment.



Financing Independent Software Productions

Another roundtable session recognized that it is sometimes difficult to create the type of game desired through the traditional software publisher. Ron Martinez of **TRANS Fiction Systems** (*Star Trek: The Promethean Prophecy* and *Hidden Agenda*) followed the popular analogy which compares the entertainment software industry to the film industry. He asserted that in software as in cinema, independent production is the key to vitality.

Quoting J.D. Salinger, he challenged the designers to "Write the book you want to read." Then he noted that the only way to really do this is to: a) do it in one's spare time, b) be independently wealthy or c) have a "hit" elsewhere so that someone is willing to underwrite the next work.

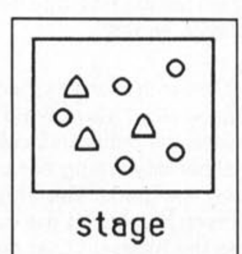
Much of the rest of the session was focused on creating limited partnerships using the independent film production model. Martinez suggested that developers form a production company to produce a specific title as opposed to forming a general corporation. He noted that there are definitely advantages to private placement of the stock as opposed to public offerings. As a major benefit to this approach, he cited the fact that it limits liability. He also encouraged designers to contract for the equivalent of what filmmakers call an "edited work print" (roughly equivalent to Alpha) rather than finished work. In this way, developers cannot get stuck with the bill for a design that isn't what the partner expected. Then, if the Alpha is acceptable to all concerned, the production can continue with funds set aside for that purpose.

How does one accomplish this? Martinez suggested that the developers put together an investment kit: storyboard, comparison with other works, analysis of how this product would be different from other works, and potential ancillary products. He further urged the design teams represented in the conference to "develop" their current properties, noting that *characters* are valuable properties whether they are in a book, film or computer/video game.

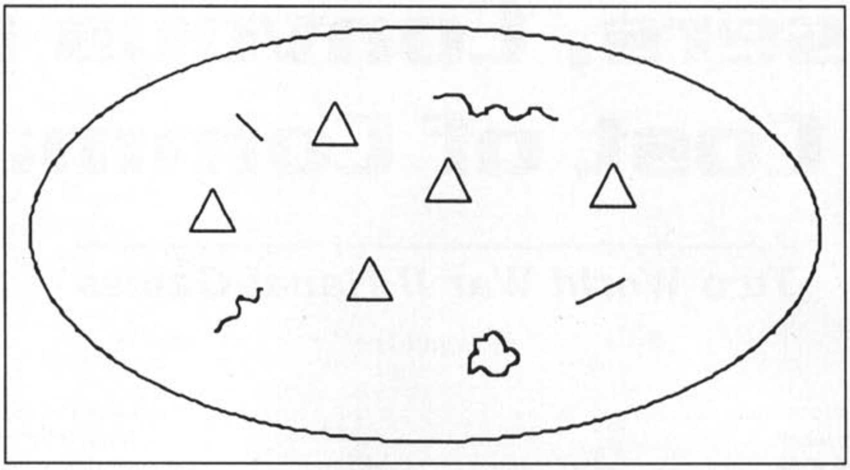
Gender and Cultural Bias in Computer Games

If computer games are going to be considered as works of art, their consequences as a tool for socialization must be considered. To that end, conferences on social responsibility and cultural bias were held in order to help define the computer game designer's role as artist within the global culture. The summary statement for those conferences would have to be, "What happens in computer games *does* mean something."

Brenda Laurel opened the panel discussion on bias with a provocative question, "What could possibly be the value of any work of art that perpetuates



the myth that nationalism and personal prestige can be enhanced through violence?"



Joyce Hakansson of **Berkeley Learning Technologies** (designer of *Touch and Discover* and *Ready, Set, Read* for **Texas Instruments**) opened the discussion with the important assertion that the message is important, especially when the target audience is the young. "All of you are educators. Anyone who creates interactive experiences is a teacher." Perhaps, the most important factor about a computer game is that it requires the player to perform visual mapping, a method of perceiving information that is different from reading or writing. Indeed, that which is learned through this visual literacy may be of longer-lasting effect than that learned through traditional means because the learner *experiences* it.

In keeping with the idea of the computer game designer's role as artist, media artist Michael Naimark stated the goal of an artist as "creating an experience which is not possible in the real world." Since computer game designers are simulating experiences that most gamers cannot participate in within the bounds of their "real" lives, their work fits the definition.

Finally, Allucquere Rosanne Stone (a fascinating academician with a visceral understanding of consciousness) challenged the designers to create computer games which do not educate people into gender distinction. In social intercourse, persons do not come into interaction with persons of another gender with expectations of a mutually beneficial *exchange*. Rather, persons tend to approach the other gender with expectations of dominance and submission based on preconceived notions. She observed that the reason "phone sex" is boring is because it uses existing cultural expectations as tokens of meaning.

Then, noting the psychological

(Continued on page 54)

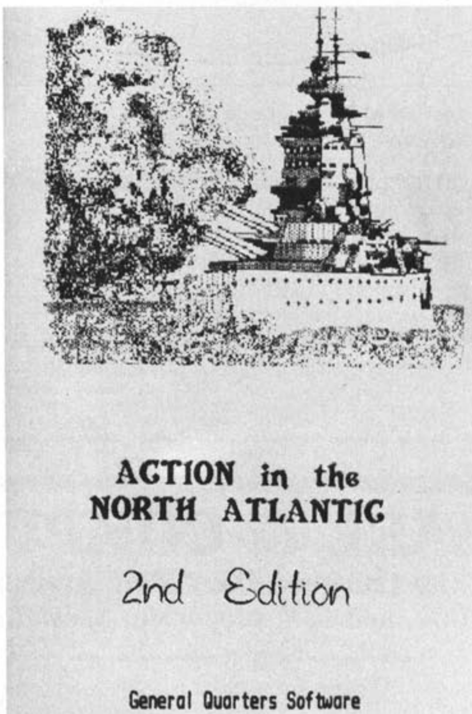
Cruisers, Convoys and the Cost of Command

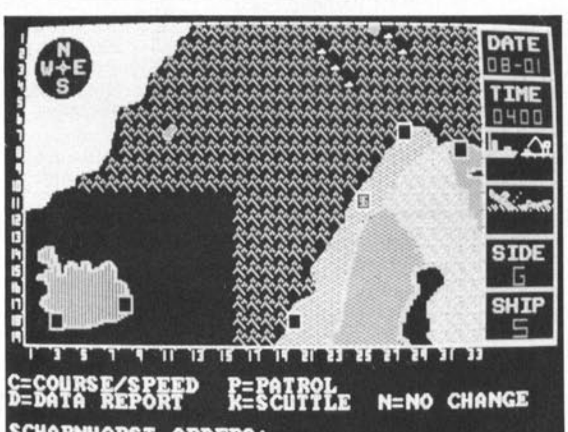
Two World War II Naval Games

by Wyatt Lee

Return with me now to those thrilling days of yesteryear, when Apple II was the machine of choice and many computer games were still text-based. *CGW* reviewed a new **Avalon Hill** computer game with the conclusion that the game had " . . . a few relatively minor problems . . . but it makes up for them in the graphic presentation." In general, the reviewer (who eventually ended up as *CGW*'s current editor) felt that the game had offered both a satisfying tactical challenge and on-screen views that effectively conveyed the feel of looking at enemy ships through the binoculars.

Now, the same basic system seen in that earlier game (*Under Southern Skies*, a naval wargame based on the hunt for the *Graf Spee*) is available for several different naval actions. The graphics have not changed significantly in these "new" games, even though the state-of-the-art has surpassed them, but the challenge and game play is still above average. The original designer of the Avalon Hill naval wargame has obviously developed these new games as a labor of love. Also, there are some new features on the IBM versions that make the games potentially more enjoyable than their predecessor: the ability to restart a tactical battle if one does not like the initial start, ability to print out the game results in hardcopy format and option of forcing the computer to change sides in a hopeless battle.





Those who are automatically prejudiced against games with CGA graphics or have no interest in the "what if"s of naval history need read no farther. The game has a limited color palette (choose your four CGA colors from a total of 24), primitive sound effects (those whistling bomb sounds come from the IBM internal speaker and there is no sound board support to make the action come to life) and documentation that looks like it has been offset at a small franchise printer. Instead, this review is primarily for those who enjoy the challenge of the "hunt" followed by a quick and relatively easy tactical resolution of the battles (usually less than a half hour).

TITLE:	Action in the North Atlantic
SYSTEMS:	Apple II, IBM
REVIEWED:	IBM
# PLAYERS:	1-2
PRICE:	$35.00
DESIGNER:	Owen P. Hall, Jr.
PUBLISHER:	General Quarters Software P.O. Box 1429 Torrance, CA 90505

The "action" in *Action in the North Atlantic* dates from the spring of 1942. In the game, as in history, the player has the option of attempting to disrupt the Murmansk-bound convoys as Grand Admiral Doenitz or defending those selfsame convoys as Fleet Admiral Pound. The strategic game can simulate five, fifteen or thirty day campaigns in which the German tries to locate the convoys via submarine, air and sea searches while the British use the same methods to avoid them.

The strategic game is based on searching a map divided into a square grid. Two-dimensional (x,y) coordinates are provided for each location. To conduct an air search, each player identifies which of three bases the search will be initiated from and sets the (x,y) coordinates for the apex of the search pattern. As the squadron of planes flies over each sea square, there is a chance of spotting the enemy which is modified by both weather and time of day.

Once located, the German can target the convoys for air attacks and direct his surface ships (the *Scharnhorst* and *Tirpitz*) toward them. German air attacks are not usually decisive and simply set up the *real* action, a tactical surface battle.

For the British, however, air attacks from the carriers can be *very* devastating. As in actual history, torpedo bombers will often sink even those ships which seem invincible. As the

(Continued on page 46)



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Electronic Arts' Indianapolis 500



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Capstone's Miami Vice®

System requirements: IBM PC, XT, AT, or compatible with 256K RAM, DOS 2.0 or higher, CGA, EGA, or monochrome graphics adaptor, and headset or external speaker.

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See Reader Input Device on page 79

The Categories

Strategy (ST): Games that emphasize strategic planning and problem solving.

Simulation (SI): Games based on first person perspectives of real world environments.

Adventure (AD): Games that allow you to take your alter ego through a storyline or series of events.

Role-Playing Adventures (RP): Adventure games that are based on character development (usually involving attributes).

Wargames (WG): Simulations of historical or futuristic warfare from a command perspective.

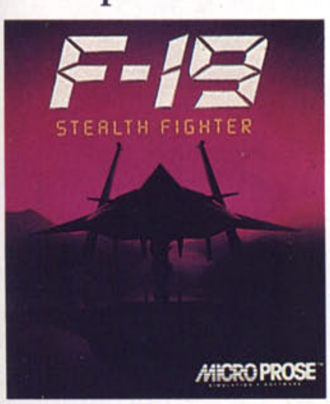
Action/Arcade (AC): Computer games that emphasize hand-eye coordination and reflexes.

Games are often listed in more than one category. In this case, the first listed category is considered primary. In order to be recognized as the "Top Game" in a given category, a game must be listed as being primarily of this specific type.

Top Role-Playing



Top Simulation



THE TOP TEN GAMES

No.	Name	Mfg.	Machine	Cat.	Avg. # Resp.	Rating
1.	Their Finest Hour	LucasFilm	Am,I	AC,SI	85	10.46
2.	Railroad Tycoon	MicProse	I	ST	52	10.25
3.	Ultima VI	Origin	I	RP	71	10.11
4.	F-19 Stealth Fighter	MicProse	I	SI	89	9.78
5.	SimCity	Maxis	Many	ST,SI	117	9.71
6.	Harpoon	Three-Sixty	I	WG	68	9.66
7.	M-1 Tank Platoon	MicProse	I	SI,WG	68	9.64
8.	Populous	EA	Am,I,ST	ST	110	9.24
9.	Battlehawks 1942	LucasFilm	Am,I,ST	AC,SI	86	9.15
	Sword of Aragon	SSI	I	WG,ST	33	9.15

No.	Name	Mfg.	Machines	Cat.	Avg # Resp.	Rating
11.	MechWarrior	Activision	I	SI,RP	48	9.13
12.	Red Storm Rising	MicProse	C,I,ST	SI	73	9.11
13.	Nuclear War	New World	Am	ST	27	9.07
14.	Wasteland	EA	Ap,C,I	RP	120	9.04
15.	Bard's Tale III	EA	Ap,C	RP	74	9.03
	Hero's Quest	Sierra	Am,I	AD,RP	49	9.03
	Lords of Rising Sun	Cnmwre	Am	AC,ST	52	9.03
	Ultima V	Origin	Ap,I	RP	102	9.03
19.	Starflight 2	EA	I	RP	58	9.00
20.	Dragon Wars	Interplay	Ap,C,I	RP	29	8.97
	Space Quest III	Sierra	Am,I,ST	AD	34	8.97
22.	Romance/3Kngdms	Koei	Am,I	ST,RP	31	8.96
23.	TV Sports Basketball	Cnmwre	Am,I,ST	AC,ST	29	8.95
24.	Bandit Kings	Koei	Am,I	ST,RP	23	8.94
25.	Indy: Adventure	LucasFilm	Am,I	AD	23	8.93
	Overrun	SSI	Ap,C	WG	24	8.93
27.	Falcon	SpcHolo	Many	SI	62	8.90
28.	NFL Challenge	XOR	I,M	ST	86	8.87
29.	Action Stations	CnflctAnlytic	I	WG	22	8.85
30.	Second Front	SSI	I	WG	32	8.82
	Conquests of Camelot	Sierra	I	AD	28	8.82
32.	Might & Magic II	NewWorld	Ap,C,I	RP	54	8.81
33.	LHX Attack Chopper	EA	I	AC	25	8.80
	The Magic Candle	Mindcraft	Ap,C,I	RP	43	8.80
35.	Genghis Khan	Koei	I	ST,RP	32	8.79
	Project Stealth Ftr	MicProse	C	SI	29	8.79
37.	Battles of Napoleon	SSI	Ap,C,I	WG	30	8.77
	Battletech	Infocom	Am,I,ST	RP	48	8.77
	Fire Brigade	Panther	Many	WG	22	8.77
	Leisure Suit III	Sierra	Am,I	AD	47	8.77
41.	Airborne Ranger	MicProse	C,I,ST	AC	74	8.76
	F-15 Strk Eagle 2	MicProse	I	SI	57	8.76
43.	King's Quest IV	Sierra	Many	AD	58	8.75
44.	Breach 2	Omnitrend	Am,I,ST	ST,RP	29	8.71
45.	Neuromancer	Interplay	Many	AD	33	8.70
46.	Indianapolis 500	EA	I	SI	26	8.69
47.	Battlechess	Interplay	Many	ST	58	8.68
48.	Curse of Azure Bonds	SSI	Ap,C,I	RP	70	8.67
	Typhoon of Steel	SSI	Ap,C	WG	43	8.67
50.	Ballistyx	Psygns	Am,ST,I	AC	20	8.65
	Chessmaster 2100	Toolworks	Many	ST	44	8.65
	Police Quest II	Sierra	I,GS,ST	AD	43	8.65
	Zany Golf	EA	Am,I,ST	AC	31	8.65
54.	Gretzky Hockey	Bethesda	Am,I	AC,ST	38	8.64
55.	Pool of Radiance	SSI	Ap,C,I	RP	116	8.61

THE HALL OF FAME

The Games In CGW's Hall Of Fame Have Been Highly Rated By Our Readers Over Time. They Are Worthy Of Play By All.

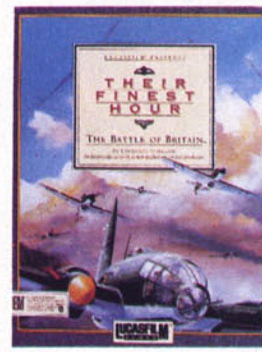
- Bard's Tale I
- Chessmaster
- Dungeon Master
- Earl Weaver Baseball
- Empire
- Gettysburg
- Gunship
- Kampfgruppe
- Mech Brigade
- Might & Magic
- M.U.L.E.
- Pirates
- Starflight
- Ultima III
- Ultima IV
- War in Russia
- Wizardry

No.	Name	Mfg.	Machines	Cat.	Avg # Resp.	Rating
56.	Champs of Krynn	SSI	Ap,C,I	RP	56	8.55
	Sword of Samurai	MicProse	I	ST,RP	43	8.55
58.	It Came From Desert	Cnmware	Am,ST	AD	36	8.54
59.	A-10 Tank Killer	Dynamix	I	SI	40	8.53
	Nobunaga's Ambition	Koei	I	ST,RP	51	8.53
61.	Drakkhen	Data East	Am	RP	27	8.52
62.	Carrier Command	Rainbird	Am,I,ST	AC,WG	49	8.51
	DeathTrack	Activision	I	AC	29	8.51
	Panzer Strike	SSI	Ap,C	WG	68	8.51
65.	Silent Service	MicProse	Many	SI	257	8.50
66.	Hostage	Mindscape	Am,I,ST	AC	28	8.47
67.	Manhunter 2	Sierra	Am,I,M,ST	AD	31	8.42
68.	TV Sports Football	Cnmwre	Am,I,ST	AC,ST	50	8.39
69.	Arkanoid	Dsc/Taito	Many	AC	69	8.38
	Wings of Fury	Brodbnd	Ap	AC	52	8.38
71.	Strike Fleet	EA	Ap,C,I	WG	79	8.37
72.	Rocket Ranger	Cnmwre	Am,ST	AC,AD	75	8.32
73.	Modem Wars	EA	C,I	ST	24	8.29
74.	688 Attack Sub	EA	Am,I	SI,ST	59	8.27
75.	Manhunter	Sierra	Many	AD	72	8.25
76.	Police Quest	Sierra	Many	AD	98	8.23
77.	Starglider II	Rainbird	Am,I,ST	AC	65	8.22
78.	Jack Nicklaus' Golf	Accolade	Am,C,I	AC,ST	28	8.21
	Three Stooges	Cnmwre	Am,C,GS	AC	68	8.21
80.	Leisure Suit Lry II	Sierra	Many	AD	52	8.20
81.	Gold of America	SSG	Am,I	ST	28	8.19
82.	Loom	LucasFilm	I	AD	38	8.18
83.	Abrams Battle Tank	EA	I	AC,SI	31	8.16
84.	Colonel's Bequest	Sierra	I	AD	28	8.14
85.	Tetris	SpcHolo	Many	AC,ST	46	8.13
86.	Vette!	SpcHolo	I	AC	26	8.12
87.	Stealth Mission	Sublogic	C	SI	36	8.11
88.	Shiloh	SSI	Ap,C,I	WG	54	8.09
89.	Knights of Legend	Origin	Ap,C,I	RP	26	8.08
90.	Faery Tale Adventure	Micllsn	Many	RP	59	8.07
91.	Speedball	Cnmware	Many	AC	35	8.06
92.	Russia	SSG	Ap,C	WG	61	8.05
93.	Sentinel Worlds	EA	I,C	RP	71	8.04
	Techno-Cop	Epyx	C,ST	AC	23	8.04
95.	Test Drive II	Accolade	Am,C,I	AC	42	8.02
96.	DragonStrike	SSI	I	SI	31	8.00
	WC Leader Board	Access	Many	AC,ST	97	8.00
98.	Breach	Omnitrnd	Many	ST,RP	114	7.98
99.	Jordan vs Bird	EA	Many	ST	47	7.96
100.	Codename: Iceman	Sierra	I	AD	63	7.92

Top Strategy



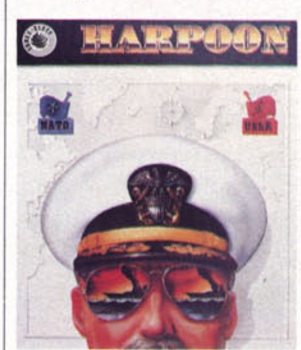
Top Action/Arcade



Top Adventure



Top Wargame



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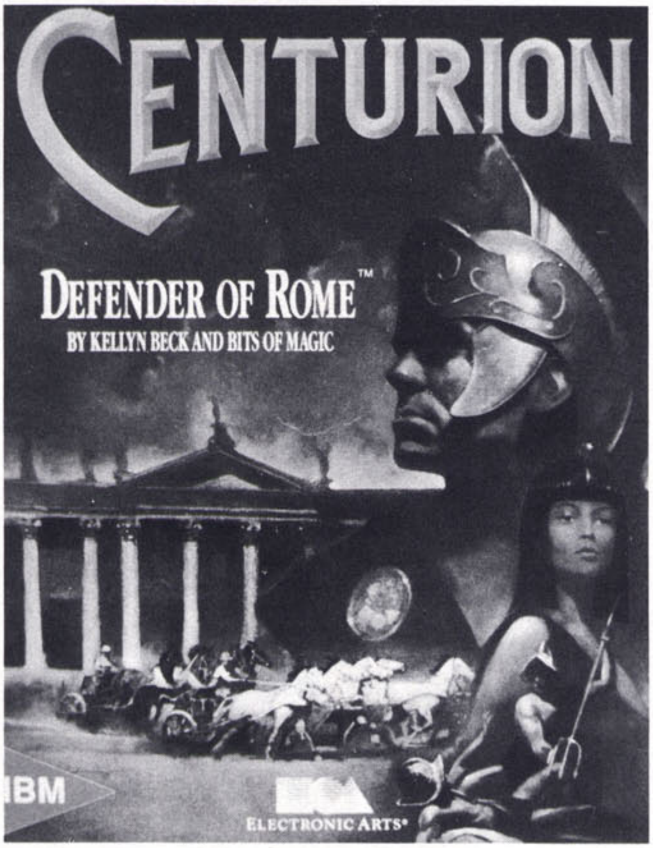
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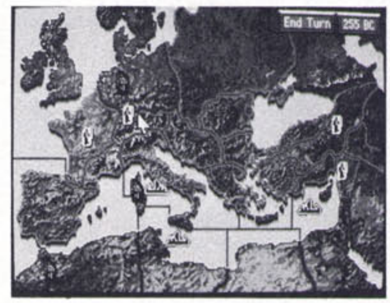
A Funny Game Happened on the Way to the Forum

Electronic Arts' Centurion: Defender of Rome

by M. Evan Brooks

TITLE:	Centurion: Defender of Rome
SYSTEM:	IBM
# PLAYERS:	1
PRICE:	$49.95
DESIGNER:	Kellyn Beck
PUBLISHER:	Electronic Arts San Mateo, CA





Centurion: Defender of Rome is a game of Empire-building. The player begins as a Roman officer commanding a single legion in 275 B.C. and attempts to conquer the known world and become the Emperor. It must be noted that *Centurion* is a *game*—action sequences take priority over any historical accuracy, and its antecedents owe more to Cecil B. DeMille than Tacitus.

Ex Libri ("Out of the Book")

Documentation: The documentation states the play mechanics in a competent and succinct fashion. There is a semi-omission in that debarking the legion from naval vessels is not explicit. In order to debark troops, the right-mouse button must be utilized.

The manual does not really cover any details about the rise of the Roman Republic or Empire, but since it is designed for a mass audience, such omissions are intentional.

The originally-planned manual had information relating to the various areas and their indigenous personnel (e.g. the numerous and savage Gauls, the effective Parthians, etc.), but such information, in the end, has been left to the player to discern during game play.

The most critical omission in the documentation concerns the impact of actions upon status. One must continually seek to expand the Empire and his personal status. While certain actions impact on personal status (chariot racing, gladiatorial combats, conquest and defeat), only actual play can determine the quantitative effects. These, in turn, depend on the difficulty level of play (ranging from galley slave [very easy] to emperor [very hard]).

For learning purposes, the difficulty level may be fine-tuned among the game aspects, e.g. galley slave in chariot racing, emperor level in gladiatorial combat.

Overall, the documentation is professionally produced and delineates the mechanics of the game. However, there are few strategic/tactical guidelines to successfully securing the Empire.

Ars Pulchra Est ("The art is beautiful")

Graphics: The graphics and sound support are superb. A full-VGA color palette is utilized, and combat sequences are among the most interesting ever done. Elephants are rendered in a basic elephantine gray, but their cupola is a shade of brown, while the blanket covering them is a separate color.

As the elephants and cavalry advance to contact, they move gracefully on the charge. When surrounded and destroyed, they collapse inwards to disappear. The troops are rendered in a two-deep line (representing a single legion), and individual cohorts (representing 150-300 men) can be assigned specific orders.

Sea battles, gladiatorial combat, chariot racing and a strategic map yield a pleasing aesthetic experience. Enemy commanders are shown in their proper equipment and the enemies of Rome are displayed properly (e.g. the Parthians are displayed in a cavalry formation, while the Greeks use an infantry phalanx).

Overall, the graphics are the strongest asset of *Centurion*. Evan and Nicky Robinson are certainly to be congratulated on a fine achievement.

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Circle Reader Service # 24

Veni, Ludi, Vici ("I came, I played, I conquered!")

Game Play: Turns are in one-year increments. Each year, a legion may be recruited in a province (assuming command control and personnel availability are sufficient) or an extant legion may act (recruit, move). The one-year increments are artificial, and are included as a reference. A five-year increment might have been more "accurate", but developing a historical persona is not the goal of *Centurion*.

Negotiation: Upon entering a new region, one will learn the potential strengths and weaknesses of the people. Generally, a people will refuse to negotiate with Rome until the Empire is sufficiently powerful to instill a sense of respect, and certain nationalities virtually never concede to Rome (e.g. Parthia).

Combat (Land): Control of a region is determined by the legion's success. One selects the initial troop formation (e.g. balanced, strong left, strong right) and then, the initial maneuver (e.g. frontal assault, stand fast, Scipio's defense [useful for elephant defense, in that it hopefully opens lanes for the elephants which can then be attacked in flank]).

However, the player may individually maneuver his cohorts. The legion is not an overly flexible tool and maneuvers are limited to one direction at a time. Yet, this gives sufficient control for the player to often secure victory (and when it seems that the enemy is about to collapse, a "General Melee" order will release the troops). In maneuvering troops, the placement of the leader is decisive, and his personal charisma and voice determine how effective his command control will be.

As troops engage, casualties are suffered, and leaders may, in fact, be killed. While dying, leaders weakly wave a white flag. This is a historical anachronism, but interesting.

While the enemy deployments are historically correct, their tactics are not always executed historically. For example, the Parthian cavalry attacks the line, but the Parthians actually used a horse-archer type of offensive wherein they rode to engage, fired their bows and then fled out of range in order to rearm (similar to the less successful Spanish carracole tactic of a thousand years later with the early pistol). Similarly, the legion uses a two-deep line, and engages with the sword only (historically, the javelin was used as the missile weapon before the legion brought its infamous short sword to bear).

In fighting large and ferocious opponents, one legion will be insufficient to secure victory. One must have two or more legions present in an adjacent province and then attack *seriatim*. While the lack of a multi-legion assault is noted, again the goal of *Centurion* was to be a game and not a simulation.

Combat (Sea): Naval combat will determine control of the seas and prepare the way for amphibious invasions. While the navy is expensive to purchase, it is necessary in order to transport the legions to Britain or Sardinia (and Carthage if the player decides to take the assault directly as opposed to traversing the Horn of Asia).

Combat is represented by a ship-against-ship battle. Firing arrows and Greek fire as ranged weapons, one will seek to secure an early advantage and then "Ramming Speed" to secure victory. There are three ship classes, and each has its own advantage (e.g. speed, durability). A good arcade admiral can often overcome a poor strategic position.

Gladiatorial Combat: When the Roman people get bored, they call for games. As the sponsor, the player must pay for both opponents. Entertainment value is more important than victory in this sequence. If there is considerable action, the people will be pleased and allow the sponsor to spare the defeated gladiator ("thumbs up"). If, however, it was a quick fight, the people will not be as happy and one must slay the hapless victim. While the player can buck the system and spare an opponent, his decision will not please the crowd and *that* was the whole purpose of the exercise. Think of gladiatorial combat as the World Wide Wrestling Federation of antiquity.

While it may seem unfair to pay for both opponents for every combat, it is actually a rental charge. The player is a Roman officer, and does not have the time to run a gladiator school or his own stable. Thus, the charge for each event is to utilize the gladiator. Interestingly enough, there is no penalty (other than the possible crowd displeasure) for killing in the ring. Surely, a penalty of some sort should have been imposed, since a bloodthirsty game patron would soon run short of "Rental Gladiators".

Chariot Racing: Chariot racing allows one to win funds in the arena—necessary for future expansion and allowing a lowering of the tax rate (which in turn will make the people more amenable to rule by Rome). While a light chariot is easier to maneuver, the pay-off is only at even odds, while the medium and heavy chariots yield a better return.

One must navigate safely around the Circus Maximus three times. Maneuver is restricted to keyboard inputs, and maximization of speed in the straight-aways must be counterbalanced with a decreased speed in the turns.

Generally, one can achieve a faster speed on the periphery of the track, but this also results in a longer distance to traverse. Thus, one shifts between the interior and the outside periphery in order to achieve a first place finish. Also, one can use the whip against nearby rivals (shades of Ben Hur).

Losing control of the chariot in the turn will result in its destruction. The charioteer will be rescued by two litter-bearers, with the litter clearly marked with a Red Cross. (A Red Cross in 275 B.C.? Shouldn't that have been Asclepius' staff?) Historical anachronism notwithstanding, it is a readily recognizable symbol.

Mechanics: Utilizing both keyboard and mouse, *Centurion* is easy to use. Game saves (limited to nine) and reloads are quick and efficient. As a press release by EA noted (with tongue in cheek), when Caesar was asked to explain his optimism even after losing his armies, his navies and his gladiators, he replied that his secret was "Saved Games!" Also, one can tailor difficulty levels in the different game aspects. When all regions of the map are conquered, one is proclaimed Caesar, Emperor of Rome at which time total casualties and results will be displayed (one might also wish that such a display could be accessed at will in order to discern his "progress").

Panem et Circenses ("Bread and Circuses")

Conclusions: *Centurion of Rome* is a graphic tour de force. It is also a historical tour de farce. However, the game was intended to be an entertaining experience and not a simulation or learning tool. As such, it succeeds admirably.

On its merits as a game, *Centurion: Defender of Rome* is enjoyable, but do not expect to gain many insights into the forging of the Empire. It is not a polished version of, say, **DataSoft**'s *Annals of Rome*. It is not even *Sword of the Samurai* in ancient Rome. Nevertheless, those who liked those old gladiator movies should be the perfect target audience for this game. **CGW**

Cruisers, Convoys

(Continued from page 38)

British bombers (which look in their wire-frame graphics incarnation on-screen more like World War I planes than World War II planes) fly toward the silhouette of the German ship, the German player has the opportunity to defend himself via a simple arcade routine. The German player uses the arrow keys on the keyboard to direct the "crosshairs" for the anti-aircraft fire. If he fails to destroy all of the incoming bombers, the torpedoes begin to take their toll.

In solitaire mode, the tactical screen takes on a different appearance, depending on whether the player is commanding the British or German fleet. If the player is Doenitz, he sees the distinctive silhouettes of his targets in the binocular view, alphabetical designations for each ship on a "radarscope" view and a silhouette of his own ship in the lower left hand corner. If the player is Pound, however, the tactical view is simply a large blue square representing the active battle area. There is an alphabetical representation of the ships involved in the battle and the silhouettes only appear when one is firing upon a target. In the two player game, the tactical screen is restricted to the "sea square" view and the silhouettes only appear when a ship's guns are actually firing.

At this point, players must determine if they want to utilize "gun and run" tactics, the "Admiral Nelson" (charge in, launch the torpedoes and flee option) or the "John Paul Jones" (close range and duke it out). As in naval miniatures, each ship must "acquire" its target prior to finding its range. Then, the longer one keeps his guns trained on the same target, the more probable it is that he will successfully hit his target.

Damage is also handled similarly to miniatures rules. When the player accesses the damage report from the tactical command menu, he is essentially checking the "damage boxes" used on miniatures player's record sheets to determine which guns are still in play and how many "hits" are left in each area. This is both an efficient and familiar way of handling damage.

Unfortunately, the tactical portion of the game is also where the most glaring problem with play appears. When the tactical display is on the screen, players can still command ships which are in the immediate vicinity of the active sea square. Unfortunately, the display does not give the location of the adjacent ship in relation to the battle. Therefore, if the player has forgotten where the ship was prior to the battle, he may be unable to bring the ship into battle. Giving a location in relation to the battle would have been quite helpful.

Nevertheless, the game play is fast and efficient. Those who like to play miniatures rules like *General Quarters* (no relation to the software publisher) should not be disappointed and those who want a strategy game that can be finished in an hour to an hour and a half should be delighted.

Off To Sink The Bismarck (*Battleship Bismarck*)

Battleship Bismarck is definitely related to its sister game. The game mechanics work exactly the same. The major dif-

(Continued on page 62)


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Over There

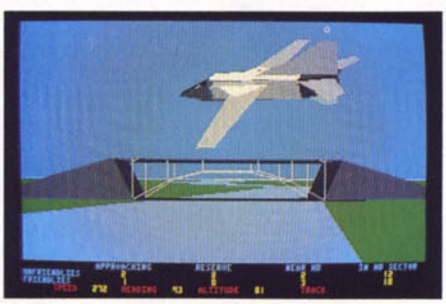
CGW's Overseas Correspondent Spies On British Developers: Inside Facts On Flight of the Intruder

by Paul Rigby









Falcon Mission Disk



Flight of the Intruder

I don't know about you, but I am chomping at the bit waiting for **Spectrum HoloByte**'s *Flight of the Intruder* to appear. Based on the book by Stephen Coonts, Intruder is rather unique for a Spectrum Holobyte product. It is being wholly developed in the UK under the auspices of **Rowan Software**, who previously wrote the superior ST and Amiga versions of *Falcon* (they developed a far smoother 3D system), as well as the first mission disk for that product. I recently paid Rowan a visit to check on how things were progressing.

Judging by the EGA version demonstrated, Intruder will herald a new generation of flight simulations. The game, which begins with a superb animation sequence of an aircraft launch from a carrier, is presented in three distinct sections in order to allow the player to learn and master the game system.

The *piece de resistance* of the whole program is the ultimate CAG (Commander Air Group) option, which asks you to command, from the cockpit of your Phantom or Intruder, seven other aircraft during air strikes in Vietnam.

The number of options are rather daunting but here are a few salient highlights. During the planning stages of an attack, you can order your aircraft to adopt a variety of tactics. For example, you can mix and match Phantoms and Intruders, assigning them as Wild Weasels (anti-SAM), MiGCAP (protecting the attack group from MiG attack), ground attack, etc. You can have a large number of infinitely variable waypoints. At each waypoint you can order an aircraft to "jink" every fifteen seconds, or fly low and cruise, etc.

After take-off (you can order each aircraft to launch at exact intervals) you will see each flight (consisting of a flight leader and his wing-man) adopt their roles and head for their assigned targets. You can, at any time, enter the cockpit of any of your aircraft, taking direct control, or the computer can do the work for you. Attack maneuvers previously unseen in home computer simulations, due to the enormous mathematical computations involved, have been introduced in the cause of realism (as has the realistic Vietnam topography). Finally, you will be given a roster of experienced pilots to command. Each will have their own personality, favorite maneuvers, skills, etc. However, lose an experienced man and you'll be stuck with a rookie replacement! So management of human resources and careful mission planning will be extremely important. It looks like *Flight of the Intruder* will be awesome.

Rowan is also developing the second *Falcon* mission disk (Amiga, IBM & Atari ST) which will incorporate five bogies in the air at once. They can be a mix of MiG-21s, MiG-27s (ground attack) and Hind attack helicopters. New weapons have been introduced, such as the AS-RAAM, and the option of defending dual mission targets is currently being investigated. You'll need to prioritize enemy targets in these missions, as the enemy will be heading for two installations at once. There will also be an option to fly your F-16 as a model aircraft (using the external 3D viewpoint) with the use of a suitable twin-stick controller.

Finally, Rowan has just begun coding a new "Battle of Britain" game (Amiga, IBM & Atari ST). Utilizing a similar 3D system to that which will be seen in Intruder, Battle of Britain will give you the option of running the British or German campaign. Obvious comparisons will be made with **Lucasfilm**'s product. However, according to Rowan, the polygon system they will use will be offer more, in a combat-oriented sense, than Lucasfilm's bit-maps because you will immediately see when an enemy is about to make a move, for example. That is, as soon as a wing begins to drop, you will know he is about to turn/maneuver. Bit-maps, say Rowan, do not allow for such subtleties as they are too jerky.

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Circle Reader Service # 27

UK software house, **Empire**, is developing *Team Yankee*, a game of tank combat based on the book by Harold Coyle. In the game, originally due out on the Amiga, you will have control of a maximum of 16 tanks with the strategic deployment of each tank taking place via a 2D map—in a similar fashion to Microprose/Spectrum Holobyte's offerings. The player has the option to control the game from four quadrant views (with 3D, polygon, and bit-mapped images in each quadrant), where each tank unit (four tanks) is represented on-screen simultaneously, or from full-screen views where one particular tank is singled out for control. Empire has no pretensions about Team Yankee, since they are not calling it a definitive tank simulation. In a similar way to Lucasfilm's Battlehawks/Finest Hour flight simulations, Empire is basically calling Team Yankee a tank combat simulation. With five missions offered, Team Yankee should be available, as you read this, for the Amiga ST, Amiga and IBM.

Available on the ST, Amiga (£19.95), C64 (£9.95), with the IBM to follow, **Goliath Games** has just released *World Championship Boxing Manager*. You play a boxing promoter. Hence, it is your job to take up to five boxers, train them and arrange the fights they will need to reach the world championship stage (either the Federation of World Boxing or the World International Boxing Council).

The majority of play is controlled via mouse/joystick and arranging fights is done via a screen showing your desk complete with Filofax, phone and sultry secretary. Training and health can be monitored in the gym and physiotherapy areas.

When the fights have been arranged and your "boys" trained to peak fitness, you can watch them in action. A very detailed, running commentary keeps you informed on how you fighter is doing and, in between rounds, you'll see a head-and-shoulders graphic of your boxer. This is were you'll be able to see what condition he is in (cuts and bruises may appear, etc) and offer tactical advice.

Well, space considerations have defeated me again. Tell you what, though, if you promise to turn up here again next month, I'll promise to bring another bunch of news from over yonder. See ya soon.

NOTE: The above games, and any of the other games mentioned in "Over There" in past issues, can be obtained from:

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Of Mutes and Men

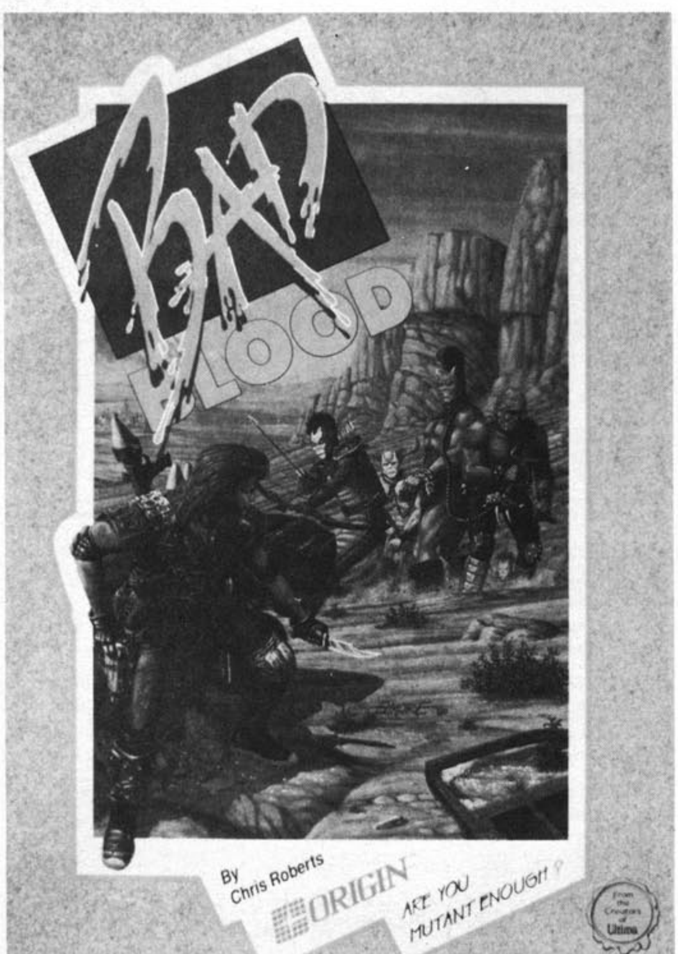
Origin Systems' Bad Blood

by Charles Ardai

TITLE:	Bad Blood
SYSTEM:	IBM
PRICE:	$49.95
DESIGNER:	Chris Roberts
PUBLISHER:	Origin Systems Austin, TX

It has been argued from time to time that computer games offer players little more than an opportunity to revel in violence and bloodshed; that they tease out into the open strains of aggression better left suppressed; and that they do so in a moral vacuum, rewarding acts not because those acts are justified or praiseworthy but solely because they have been executed properly. *Bad Blood* will do little to dispel this image.

The game is an *Ultima*-style RPG divided roughly equally among exploration, conversation, and combat. In other words, first one finds creatures, then one extracts any and all useful information from them, and then one kills them. Even granting that exploration is not simply a matter of finding other sentients, and that the creatures a player meets are divided between those one is supposed to talk to and those one is supposed to kill, the basic structure of the game encourages the order of operations described above.



What frame story sets up this rather pedestrian action? An appropriately pedestrian one. In place of a generic fantasy quest players are treated to generic post-nuclear sf.

A nuclear holocaust has ravaged the world; in the generations since, a variety of mutations have turned the human gene pool into a grotesque menagerie not unlike the ones one encounters in most fantasy games. The devastated landscape is roamed by dragons, snake-men, giant bugs, flying stingrays and other refugees from the earliest FRP universes. Nine of the monsters have their own distinct characteristics and portraits in the four-color anti-piracy device titled "Thale's Comprehensive Guide to the Beasts and Savages of the Plains." (Note: This *is* copy protection and *not* full-fledged documentation.)

The world's non-savage mutes have holed up in a handful of small walled towns, as have the remaining pure-blood humans. In the best spaghetti Western fashion, a blood feud has arisen between the parties, the humans being unsavory bigots out to kill and/or enslave the entire mutant population. The mutants choose a hero (the player gets to select from among three characters: a male human, a female mutant who can shoot "eye beams," and a huge male mutant) to dope out the truth behind rumors that the humans are planning an all-out war on the mutes; and if the rumors are true, to do whatever is necessary to stop the war before it starts.

The player's job is to travel the plains, questioning the characters he meets from a menu of relevant topics including such subjects as the war, the rampaging giant bear people keep talking about, the location of elusive figures, and so forth. Information so solicited gets added to the menu for future encounters. A secondary task is simple survival, which depends largely on one's combat abilities; a tertiary task is the accumulation of food and weaponry, which are also crucial for survival. Simply stated, the player wanders around killing, stealing, and interrogating.

What makes this tiresome is that it is in no way original. Too often before we have sent a tiny figure scurrying here and there over a vast terrain in pursuit of one noble, world-saving goal or another. In order to make this dynamic work again, a designer has to offer something in the way of plot and character, neither of which gets adequate attention in *Bad Blood.*

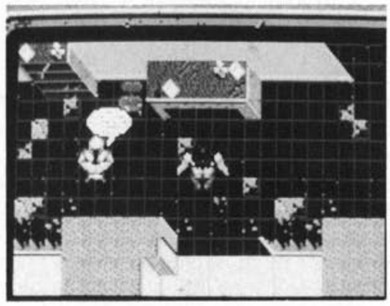
The heroes are ordinary toughs (or "tuffs," as they are called in mute argot) on ordinary missions. The villains are bad to the core. (Wouldn't it be refreshing to play a game in which the snake-men are *not* "wily, quick, and not to be trusted"?) The macho mutes strut and fume and spout cliches as reliably as Old Faithful; the evil humans play their parts as predictably as the extras in an old Flash Gordon serial; the wise, old Oracle does unadulterated Yoda schtick. Never mind the fact that fighting one's way back and forth across a wasteland is enough to bore the most stalwart hack-and-slasher—even a CRPG junkie deserves more at the end of the rainbow than the same old hoary p[l]ot of gold.

In addition, one cannot help but feel that the game is genuinely offensive. After establishing a noble and stirring cause—valorous freedom fighters against vile slavers (about as subtle as a poke in the eye), *Bad Blood* encourages players to act in reprehensible ways. Most of the characters the player kills are not vile racist humans, but fellow mutants. Most of the supplies the player acquires are lifted from the unguarded huts of his peers. One NPC remarks, when he meets the player, that he *knows* the player will steal from his town. Sure enough, the player does. There are no repercussions, at least not negative ones.

Consider another example: on the plains, there are creatures known

as turkels. "Whipping tentacles" and "caustic blood" aside, turkels are no threat to anybody. They move with glacial speed, usually (wisely) away from the player. Why wisely? Because the turkel is unfortunate enough to possess a heart which, when consumed, has extraordinary rejuvenative powers. This means that players try to kill the poor beast whenever it appears, most effectively by lobbing grenades at it, just so they can carve out its heart and eat it raw (Dried hearts are available, too, but their power is minimal.).

Now, I realize that the turkel's direct ancestor is not so much the turtle it resembles (both in shape and name) as the mothership that flew across the screen in *Space Invaders*—the turkel is bonus points, an extra life. However, if designer Chris Roberts wants players to take his fiction seriously, he has to accept a certain authoral responsibility towards his creations; he has to treat them with more respect than this.



One could massacre hordes of space invaders remorselessly because they were nothing more than video images. If Roberts wants the turkel to be *more* than a video image and wants us to submerge ourselves in the world of his game, he owes it to himself not to treat his creations in the cavalier fashion he displays in *Bad Blood*.

Indeed, all signs point to Roberts' *not* taking his creation seriously. As a game, it is top-flight work, certainly up to par with the latest *Ultima* in terms of mechanics. There are few technical flaws. Therefore, one might ask whether this is not enough. It is not, not for a game that wants to be more than a Nintendo romp, and more than every other similar game on the market.

As a game, *Bad Blood* fast becomes dull; as a narrative, it is cliched; and as a moral entity, it is suspect. There *are* nice touches scattered throughout: the opening animation showing the gradual evolution of a pre-war farmhouse into a post-disaster stockade; the game's graphic conceits, such as the use of an old TV screen to display the action and the water level in a soda bottle to represent one's life force; and the rich (Anthony) Burgess-esque mutant slang employed with commendable consistency (I wonder how many people out there will understand why 'Arnie' means "to sell out or change sides".).

There are also minor flaws, such as the occasionally unresponsive combat controls and the conspicuous lack of a "quick-exit" command to take the player straight to the door of a room he is finished exploring, which would eliminate a lot of laborious backtracking.

However, all of this pales to insignificance in light of the fact that there is no compelling reason to play *Bad Blood* and several reasons not to. *Wasteland* handles the post-nuclear *milieu* more effectively; *Ultimas* IV, V, and VI tell better adventure stories; **Infocom**'s *Trinity* tells a (much) more sophisticated and responsible nuclear story (although the skink may be the turkels without overkill); Nintendo-style "adventure" games offer better combat action without pretending to be something they are not. *Bad Blood* is nothing if not well-intended, but it fails for want of a spark of innovation, either in the story or the gameplay. **CGW**

CGD Conference

(Continued from page 37)

studies since the U.S. Civil War which indicate that amputees remember themselves as physically "whole" individuals in their mental perception of themselves, she urged creative thinking that would enable both genders to have a healthy mental image. Observing the "Hero" motif that underlies most role-playing, she asked where the hero form for young women might be. She cynically noted that most games which purport to have female protagonists simply reduce females to the role of an "adolescent boy" who happens to have a fuller figure. In order to have games which do not subconsciously prolong gender discrimination, designers must take more effort to break the molds and explore the boundaries of cultural assumptions.

Virtual Reality

Warren Robinett (**University of North Carolina**) chaired a discussion on the potential of "virtual reality" for gaming. *CGW* #72 (pages 26 and 78) described the basic technology involved, so this summary will describe some of the game design issues which were raised. First, the technological issues were considered. The technology of "virtual" world building needs a commitment to language. Many "reality hackers" building these virtual reality systems believe that we are in a post-symbolic environment. Since what you see is what you get, there is no need for language. The designers in this session insisted that the "reality hackers" not give us brand new worlds and refuse to let us speak. Second, the problem of force-feedback and the imprecision currently involved was discussed. Third, designers suggested adding galvanic skin responses to the system, monitoring heartbeats to determine how much stimulation the player was experiencing and implanting about twenty sensors on the face in order to provide a "puppet mask" video system so that the player's facial expressions could be projected into another player's virtual world. Finally, the current difficulties of interfacing two units were briefly discussed.

The session ended with an observation that there was still a long way to go before virtual games would become a reality. As one wag noted, "It's not necessary to build a Dream Park machine until we learn how to program what's there."

Artificial Opponents

Speaking of programming what's there. Dave Menconi offered a stimulating look at the technical side of artificial opponents. One method for getting computer opponents to make sensible moves, which Menconi cited as prominent in computer chess programs, is the use of a tree search. In a tree search, the program searches all the possible moves that could be made and all the possible countermoves which could be made by the human player. Then, the program examines the potential chain of consequences of each of these moves. Naturally, the tree can get very large very quickly and secondly, designing code which can evaluate a complex game in an accurate fashion may be impossible.

Another procedure, which may be used autonomously or interdependently with the tree-search function, is the evaluation function approach. In these functions, the designer has determined the most important elements in the game and programs a formula to let the artificial opponent routine evaluate these elements from most to least important. Then, the program can decide what to do.

Menconi defined heuristics in artificial opponents as using "rules" to fit the situations. He noted that some use heuristics to mean that the opponent learns from the player, but described his idea of heuristics as being similar to a deck of cards with three data fields. In his example, one of the fields would be a number, another would be a condition and another would be a command. Then, the program would look through the "deck of cards" until it found a case where all three conditions were true.

Thus, if a tank had a combat value of 25 and was three miles from the objective, it might be ordered to charge the objective. If the same tank had a combat value of 11 and was the same three miles from the objective, it might be ordered to retreat.

In his as yet unpublished futuristic tank game, Menconi assigned different types of jobs to several of the tanks: scouts (looking around to find the enemy command cyber), pathfinders (advancing quickly to try to take control of the center of the board) and attackers (tanks designed to destroy particular types of enemy tanks). Thus, each tank would run through the "deck of cards" related to its particular job, find one where all the conditions are true and execute the command. This is an efficient way to write standard artificial opponents for almost any type game.

Optical Media

The techniques of artists are often transformed by their media. Paper and canvas offer different textures for the painter. Pipe organs offer a richer sound quality than electronic organs, yet electronic organs offer new dimensions to the musician. Greg Riker (Director of Development for **Microsoft's Multimedia Systems Group**) asked if the designers believed that optical media would change the face of games.

As a true believer, he offered some statistics that provide potential excitement. Just the *amount* of data that could be possible to place on a compact disc, whether it be CD-I, CD-ROM or DV-I offers an amazing potential. Anywhere from 550 megabytes to 680 megabytes can be stored on such a disk (depending on the standard utilized). The data transfer rate is about 150 kilobytes per second and the "seek time" for particular pieces of data (circa one second) is continually being reduced. Further, the cost factor is *not* prohibitive. It currently costs about $1,500 to master a CD and about $2.00 per disc to duplicate them.

Those who are skeptical of optical storage should note what is *already* being accomplished. The U.S. Navy input 30,390,000 pages of a warship maintenance manual which required 41.5 linear feet of storage space onto 135 compact discs which required 2.5 linear feet of storage space. Further, all of the figures just cited refer to current encoding procedures (using pits and lands). On the horizon is a rainbow or spectral encoding procedure that will offer 1,000 possibilities per pit, virtually exploding the storage potential of the optical medium. Add faster data transfer rates and read/write capabilities to these already potent capacities and one has an awesome tool at his/her disposal.

So, assuming Riker is correct and CD-based games *are* the future of computer games, what difference will it make to the gamer? Riker offered several suggestions for extending the

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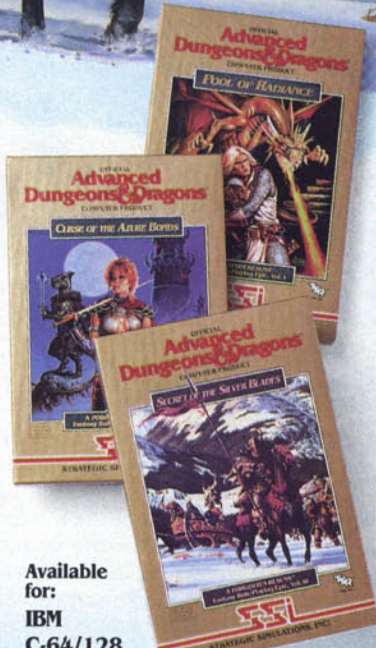
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Riker closed his presentation by suggesting a new genre of games that may be an area of opportunity, information retrieval games. Noting that the skill of finding information is the next battleground of society (i.e. information retrieval is fast becoming a survival skill), he suggested that games which honed one's "research" capacity would be *very* valuable in the future. Optical storage is the best medium for such a game.

Arcade Games: Their Promise and Failure

As the community of developers has grown, there has been an increased interest in other art forms within the rubric of computer entertainment. This year, with **MicroProse** preparing to enter the coin-op business with their new *F-15 Strike Eagle* coin-op, it was appropriate to examine the differences between the two formats. **Atari Games**' Ed Rotberg talked to the designers about the differences between personal computer software and coin-op games. Rotberg readily admitted that coin-ops do not use state-of-the-art hardware. He observed that coin-ops are three to five years "behind the times," noting that most coin-ops are still using 68000 processors when the personal computer market has moved on to 80386s, 80486s and 68030s.

However, he contended that the difference between the two types of products is a matter of quality. Rotberg noted that celebrity licenses and crossover marketing from other media will often sell a certain number of personal computer games. On the other hand, coin-op designers who want to make sure that they get more than one quarter from a consumer must make sure that the player gets a quality experience in the first couple of minutes. The designer must convey a stimulating environment and theme *without* an intimidating learning curve. Without an easy learning curve, coin-op games will be too intimidating for players to even invest quarters. It is true that they strive for a *minimum* of instructions. He stated that an axiom of the coin-op industry is that, "If you have to read the instructions, it isn't going to be successful."

Another major difference that was noted in this session is that coin-op designers create their games for *one* platform, the specific hardware built for that particular game. They do not have to rely on a joystick, keyboard or mouse controller, but can design a controller to fit the specific interface. Further, they can isolate the gamer in the cabinet and make them feel like they are in a particular vehicle cockpit.

World Building

Starflight designer Greg Johnson defined three elements that go into a role-playing universe. These are process elements (game sequences, strategies, activities which are performed over and over again and provide a balance of competition), gate elements (ways to control the flow of the plot via physical gates, not only one to continue on until they have done something, or conceptual gates) and fictional elements (characterization and plot).

There is a mistaken impression, according to Johnson, that providing a good story is to create a story and develop a game which forces the character down the line of that plot. Then, in order to make a game, they add multiple paths.

Johnson prefers to start off with a different set of assumptions. Rather than starting off with the story, he tries to start with a "world" or "environment." He thinks of this environment as an "interactive machine" that the player can be "dropped" into.

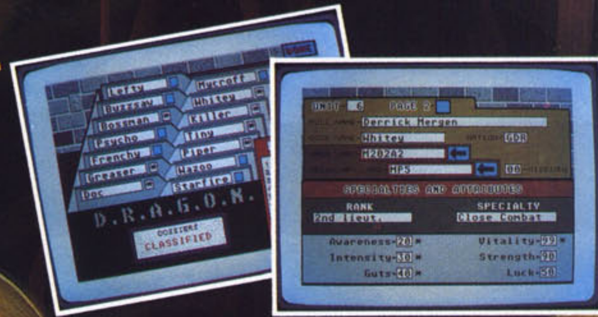
His suggestions for developing a rich environment include the following.
1. Start with a mood or feeling rather than a particular story line.
2. Because computer game designers are trying to force a very large experience through a very small hole (the computer screen), characters should be larger than life (even caricatures are probably okay) and their reactions should be as process-intense as possible.
3. Use process-oriented activities (exploration, combat, etc.) as a backdrop for the world, enriched by a number of artifacts, discoveries and encounters that the character doesn't *have* to experience to win the game.
4. Do not get too carried away with using gates, but try to have a couple so that players do not get too far off the track.

Greg Stafford, of the pen and paper game publisher **Chaosium** (*Call of Cthulhu*), noted the following areas where computer role-playing games can improve.
1. CRPGs do not really provide the epic scale and potential that role-players want to experience.
2. CRPGs do not provide the responsiveness to the player's actions that they should. Only a few have realistic reactions to acts of ethical irresponsibility.
3. CRPGs are not effectively presenting the great quests which offer enough ambiguity to allow for self-discovery.
4. Magic and mystery in CRPGs do not offer enough of the sense of the "otherness" that should be present in a fantasy game.
5. Why are the issues of sex and death which are such driving forces in life not addressed in any meaningful way in CRPGs?
6. The absence of significant (and sometimes, ambiguous) moral conflict is too often absent from CRPGs.
7. Too often, there is an absence of significant results and/or appropriate rewards in CRPGs.

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Circle Reader Service # 29

Future Wars

(Continued from page 35)

some animated sequences in which no interaction is necessary and the player simply watches the story advance.

Particularly noteworthy in *Future Wars* is its stereo musical score. Rumored to be available on compact disk (at least, in Europe), it ranges from Renaissance to futuristic, following the story. It is a respectable soundtrack which many will consider superior to most of those composed and released for theatrical films.

Future Wars comes on two disks which contain no disk-based copy protection and the program is easily installed on a hard drive. A blank disk is necessary to save games in progress and one disk will hold multiple saves. Restoring a saved game after a failure is admirably quick and effortless.

Complaints

The detailed graphics are truly a multi-edged weapon. Not only do they hide objects, but they also impede movement around the screen by the main character. The Traveller must be standing near certain objects to either examine or manipulate them. Finding the exact position which is close enough to an object, yet not blocking it, can be a frustrating experience. Simply strolling from one spot to another can become equally irritating when there is excess graphic debris blocking the way.

One of the most agitating moments in *Future Wars* occurs when the program is first booted. The copy protection for the program is based entirely on some color and pattern matching between the screen and the documentation. Unfortunately, the colors are inconsistent and the patterns don't match. Many legitimate owners of the game will be booting it more than once in order to get started.

Hints

Although many objects are difficult to spot, probably the most difficult is a little gas capsule. It is somewhere in the medieval era and the Traveller must not leave that time period without this easily-missed object in his inventory. Should he do so, his adventure will come to an abrupt halt in the future and he will not be able to return to the past.

Another difficult sequence, which is misleading, takes place at the rail station in the future. The Traveller has only a brief wait at that location before his transportation arrives. In that short time, however, there is an item which must be obtained. It takes several actions to do this, one of which must be repeated more than once. As above, the adventure will later come to a dead halt if this task is not accomplished in the very short time allotted.

Conclusions

The "Cinematique" gaming system is not quite the innovation *Future War*'s designers claim it to be—similar features have appeared in games by **Sierra** as well as **Lucasfilm**. However, there are still plenty of reasons to invest in the program. The story (though not quite the work of an H.G. Wells) is a good one and the graphics are excellent. The music score, although not integral to game-play, is outstanding. Players who enjoy animated graphic adventures would be well advised to check this one out. **CGW**

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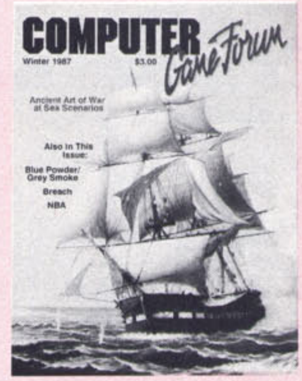
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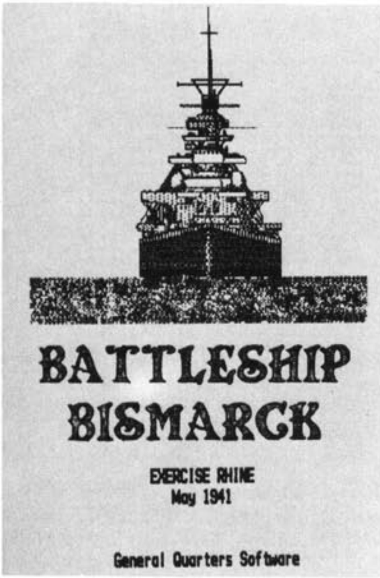
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Cruisers, Convoys

(Continued from page 46)





TITLE:	Battleship Bismarck
SYSTEMS:	Apple II, IBM
REVIEWED:	IBM
# PLAYERS:	1-2
PRICE:	$35.00
DESIGNER:	Owen P. Hall, Jr.
PUBLISHER:	General Quarters Software P.O. Box 1429 Torrance, CA 90505

ferences are: the orders of battle and time period simulated (since the events in this game took place in the spring of 1941), as well as the destination points for the merchant ships (since they must exit off the southern end of the map rather than arriving in the port of Murmansk).

In *Battleship Bismarck*, the German player takes on the role of Admiral Lutjens in attempting to raid commercial vessels in the Atlantic and the British player "becomes" Admiral Tovey in attempting to sink the nearly invincible German raider. Everything else plays and looks essentially the same. Players who like one of these games will definitely like the other.

If there is a place for "small run" computer game publishers, products like these can fit the bill. At $35.00, these games are not exactly "budgetware," but the increase over the $25.00 price point given to *Under Southern Skies* may be acceptable when one considers the increasing number of games priced at $49.00-$69.00. These are not complex and detailed games, but they still have plenty to offer the military gamer. **CGW**

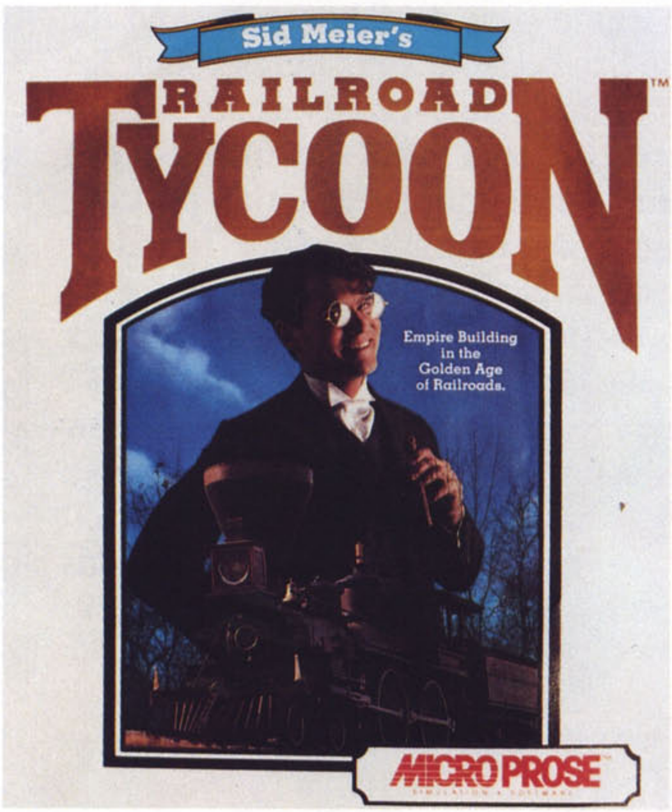
Advertiser Index

Tycoon "Tooter" Two

Stoking The Fires In Railroad Tycoon

by Alan Emrich

Last issue, we got trains rolling and helped put players on the path to the Presidency (or Prime Ministership) with some helpful techniques for commencing a game of **MicroProse**'s *Sid Meier's Railroad Tycoon*. Surveys, "milk runs", and the secret of laying down (track) on the job are all important to consider before running that first engine. However, after "old Betsy" leaves the station for her maiden run, new and much larger problems will confront the aspiring Tycoon. Here, then, is some advice from old "Engineer Bob" at *Computer Gaming World*.



On Resisting The Robber Barons

A "balanced attack" in financial matters is a safe, conservative route to success. A mixture of line improvements and stock investments will take a player up the ladder to success. However, as in Sid Meier's *Pirates* (another game where ultimate success is measured by post-retirement social standing), conservative play can, at best, usually only bring one *near* the top, rarely ever actually *to* it. If, after repeated play, a player can be satisfied with a very successful career (and the satisfaction of a job well done), these penultimate place finishes are no big deal. If, however, a player is consumed by the quest to be President (or Prime Minister), more radical money making schemes will be useful (and are presented in this article).

Early on in the life of one's railroad, it will be necessary to put a plaque on the R.R. President's desk with the immortal Latin phrase, "Novissimum Custodite!" (literally, "Protect the rear!", or in the *CGW* translation, "Cover your butt!"). Anyone who has carefully picked out an initial line of track which enables him/her to run a nice profitable "gravy train" had better *protect it!*. This is because the three computerized competitors are tantamount to the Furies of Greek mythology, sent to personally torment the player and rob him of all his good works. So, buy your own stock before the robber barons can steal your hard-earned company out from under you!

With ten blocks of stock of 10,000 shares each offered initially, a competitor must acquire six blocks (60%) in order to successfully take over (and if the player is taken over he is ignominiously run out of town on a rail!). Since both the human and computer players have equivalent access to the Stock Broker, buyouts often turn into races to see who can borrow the most money and buy the most shares fastest. These "runs" on one's company stock often become a run for the player's life. The best way to insure one against these 19th Century leveraged buyouts is to get a head start. Buying 20-30,000 shares early on is the key. Even if it seems difficult to afford, it is necessary to make the sacrifice.

Buying early (in the first 6-8 years), offers a double advantage. The first advantage is that one is protected early on (and when those new competing railroads come on line, they often have too much money and too much borrowing power at a time when the player is already stretched financially thin). The second advantage is that, barring phenomenal early success, the price of one's stock is relatively cheap. It usually takes only a $500,000 bond and the 30,000 shares needed are ready to pocket.

Another ploy, albeit devious, is to deliberately run one's railroad "into the ground" early on, driving stock prices to the floor. Then, buy up 90% (the maximum purchasable) of the extant stock and proceed to correct the problem. Players who might have pangs of remorse or fits of conscience will have to remember that the likes of inside traders often go, at best, only lightly punished (Ivan Boesky wound up in a plush prison nicknamed "Club Fed"). There's nothing like a game of *Railroad Tycoon* to teach the distinction between ethics and *business* ethics!

Stock manipulation can also be done in more "legitimate" buying and selling of other railroad's stock. Build a cash reserve, then make "runs" on the stock of weak railroads. They'll start buying it up, as well. Often, borrowing the considerable sums required to do so will leave them even weaker. At this point, the price will become inflated. Then,

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Dirk the Daring in his quest to rescue the lovely Princess Daphne.



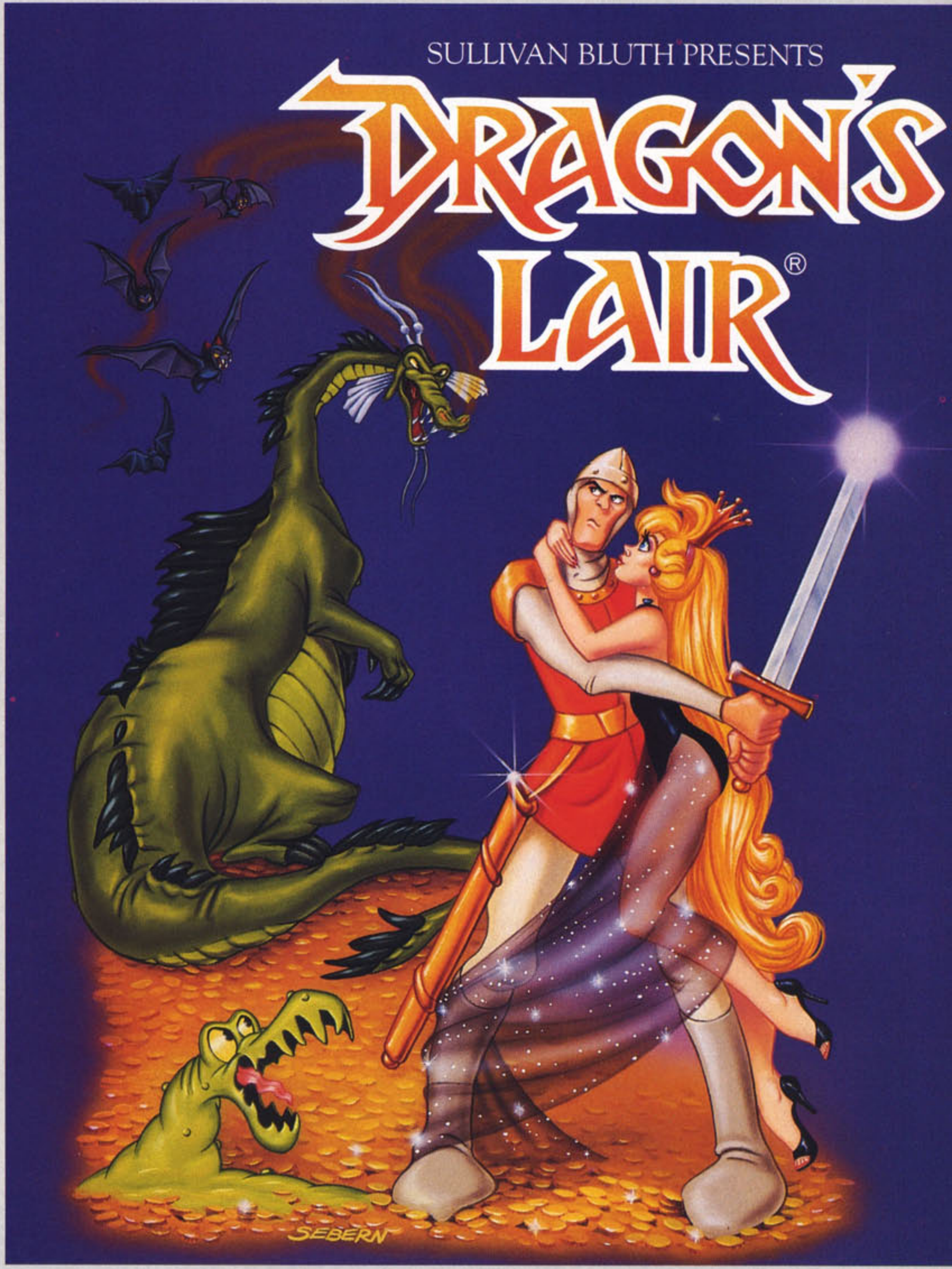
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sell off the stock at the inflated prices, leaving the other railroad holding the bag.

Bleeding Red Ink

One secret to building a successful railroad is to avoid letting one's debts mount too high. The killer interest rate on that big red number on the screen (12%) can quickly read like the national debt. A short term solution can be found in borrowing more money (at a lower interest rate), but at some point, it has to be paid back. *No railroad* can really prosper when the "interest payment tape worm" is eating it up.

One tip, though, is to utilize bankruptcy creatively. A bold railroad executive might borrow every last nickel that his/her credit allows and *then* proceed to declare bankruptcy. After all, half the debt gets relieved and, if the other half is in one's back pocket, complete relief is in sight! Giving credit where credit is due tends to make one a nice guy. *Taking* credit where credit is offered makes one rich and *that's* the way *Railroad Tycoon* is won.

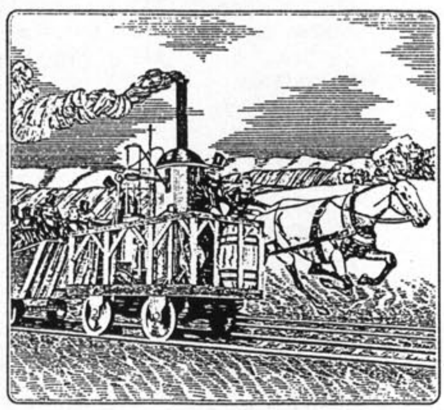
Rate War / Total War

One way to tell if a player is on the way to becoming a future President is to watch the rate wars. If the competing railroads start using them to muscle in at one's own stations, this is *not* a good omen for the player. If, however, the player becomes aggressive enough, the kind who walks right up to the competition's door and kicks it down, he or she will have become the type of ruthless so-and-so who can scratch and claw all the way to the top. However, no one should ever start a war that cannot be easily won (and quickly).

When engaged in a rate war, one should immediately freeze the game. The first step is to take inventory. Determine what the city under siege of competition supplies and demands. Then, reroute *every* train, if necessary, to win that rate war! In *Railroad Tycoon*, the price for success is negligible compared to the price for failure. A rate war *is* "total war." So, reroute everybody, double track the way into the station and upgrade the trains that serve it. All stops must be pulled to win a rate war, *and quickly!* If won fast enough, the bonus income received (from all the newly scheduled trains stopping at the station) might more than offset the cost of the war.

Breaking All The Rules

This section is only for those players who do not know the meaning of the word "guilt." What we offer here are un-



conscionable acts of program exploitation which just might be able to leave one's name posted in the game's Hall of Fame as "President of the United States".

Taking Your Track On The Road: Instead of finding the choicest spot to begin a railroad, find the absolute worst! Build a short line, with two depots, and wait for the competition to move in. After all three "enemies" perch on your doorstep, just remove track until your entire rail line disappears. Then, just start anew in the garden spot, leaving your competition high and dry! Leave them stuck in Turkey, Scotland, Arkansas or Utah. Make them suffer even as one's railroad "slimes" out of town to set up shop elsewhere (sounds just like an NFL franchise moving, doesn't it?).

The Pursestring Pounce: Set up a quaint, cheap little railroad in a garden spot. Borrow $2,000,000 and wait until a new railroad comes on line. The second it does, *pounce*! Buy their stock before they can buy any shares. While the player is calling the broker to make stock purchases, the computer opponent is wasting its calls trying to borrow enough money to keep up!

Once the player hits the 60% threshold, the remaining 40% become public shares. Take all of the new railroad's money and use it to bail out one's own railroad. Next, sell 10,000 shares of the railroad taken over, and then it's back under its own management, in debt and half owned by the player.

The first thing the railroad's new management will do is to borrow more money, giving that railroad at least $500,000. Fine. Buy 10,000 shares, take it over again, pocket the cash, and repeat the process. A player should be able to rake off three to five million dollars and the competing railroad should die off after a couple of fiscal periods. By using this method, a player can often manage to keep control of two competing railroads, and keep exploiting the third for easy money.

The Ties That Bind

With all of these diabolical techniques at one's disposal, it should become easier to successfully create an "octopus" of a railroad that can entrap even an award-winning game design like *Railroad Tycoon* in the tentacles of gamesmanship. Just remember, they didn't call them "robber barons" for nothing. **CGW**

Thanks to Joe Halada and Gavin Helf (PRODIGY interactive personal service users) for the "Pursestring Pounce" and "Track on the Road" strategies.



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CGW's Game of the Year Awards

Overall Game of the Year

Railroad Tycoon

Action Game of the Year

Their Finest Hour

Adventure Game of the Year

Hero's Quest

Role-Playing Game of the Year

Starflight 2

Simulation Game of the Year

M-1 Tank Platoon

Wargame of the Year

Harpoon

Special Artistic Achievement Award

Loom



Each June, *CGW*'s editorial staff examines the releases from one Consumer Electronics Show to another and attempts to determine those games which have contributed the most to each of the five categories listed in our Top 100. The ratings given by our readers, technological merit, product impact and judgment of the editors all come into play in the final decision. In addition, the editors enjoy presenting special awards to those games which excel in at least one aspect of their design and/or presentation.

So, if you please, get out your tuxedos and formals, murmur in anticipation as the lights lower and the spotlight shines at center stage, giggle with delight as the entire staff and freelancers of CGW perform "This Is It!" (the opening song from the *Bugs Bunny* television show) as our opening production number, and enjoy Computer Gaming World's Annual Game of the Year Extravaganza.

Action Game of the Year

Nominees for **Action Game of the Year** are:
Activision for **DeathTrack**—Darek Lukaszuk and Terry Ishida (designers) with John A. S. Skeel and Steve Ackrich (producers), proving once again that **Dynamix** knows how to give players the feel of motion and space in a 3-Space environment;
Accolade for **Hardball II**—Don Mattrick, Chris Taylor and Rick Friesen (designers) with Pam Levins (producer), injecting state-of-the-art graphics and new elements of strategy into a classic of the genre;
Cinemaware for **TV Sports: Basketball**—Larry Garner and John Cutter (designers) with Jerry Albright (producer), improving their successful sports series with the substance of strategy and statistics to match the already breathtaking graphics and sound;
Lucasfilm Games for **Their Finest Hour**—Lawrence Holland (designer and project leader) with Martin Cameron and James McLeod (artists), establishing that beautifully bit-mapped graphics and special effects do not impede the heat and excitement of participating in aerial combat on the computer; and
Microprose for **Sword of the Samurai**—Lawrence Schick (designer and project leader) with Jim Synoski, John Kennedy, David McKibbin, Dan Chang and Sid Meier (additional design), elegantly combining elements from many different styles of games into a coherent, challenging and enlightening game.

And the WINNER of *CGW*'s **Action Game of the Year** is:
Lucasfilm Games for *Their Finest Hour*—CGW's readers immediately perceived that *Their Finest Hour* surpassed even the quality of its predecessor (*Battlehawks 1942*). Hence, its rating propelled it to the top of our Top 100 faster than a rocket-propelled jet from the next game due in the series. The watchword of this series is action and the word from consumers seems to be unmitigated satisfaction.

Adventure Game of the Year

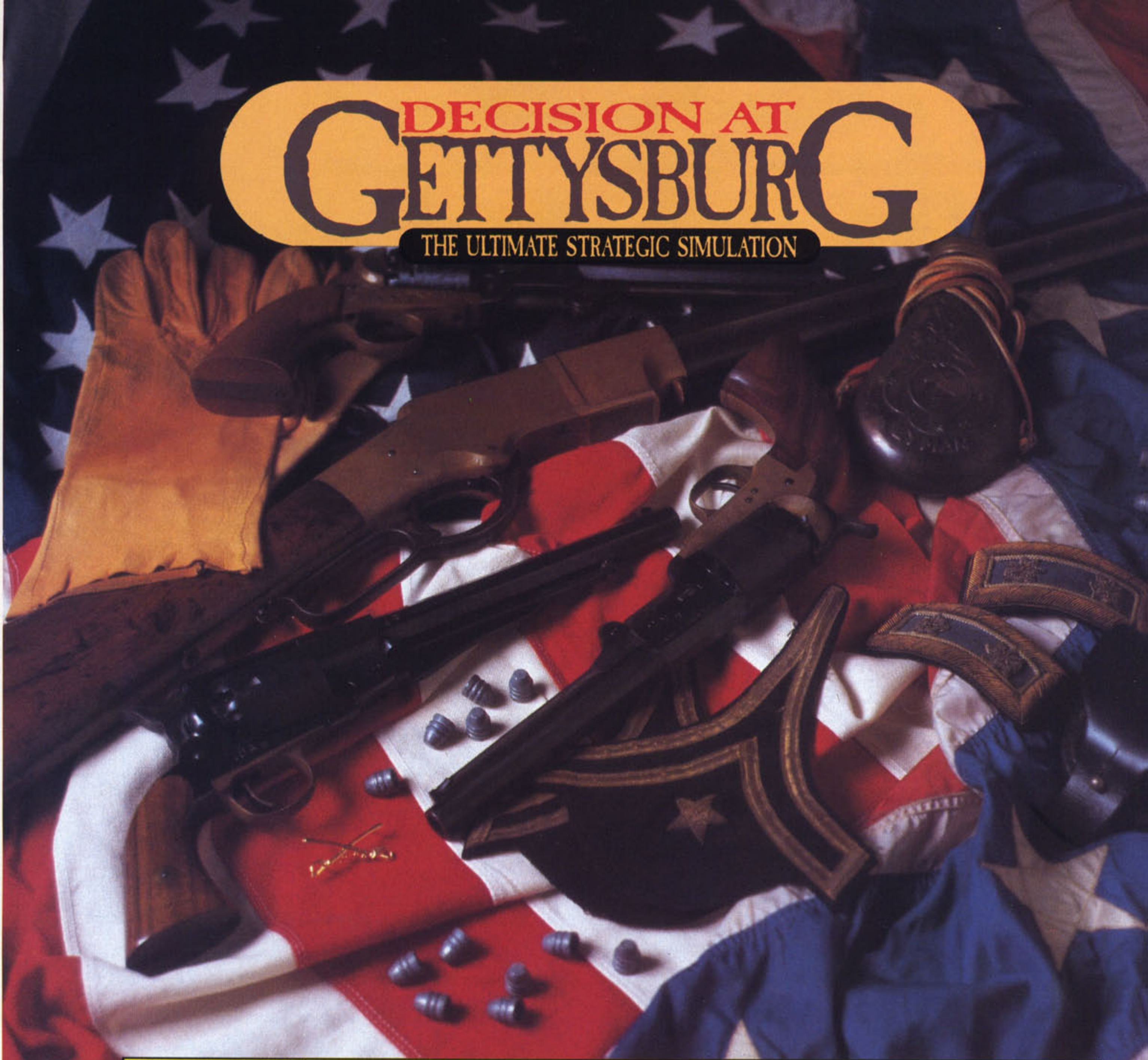
Nominees for **Adventure Game of the Year** are:
Cinemaware for **It Came From The Desert**—Ken Melville and David Riordan (designers), producing a product that is as "cinematic" in story as its predecessors were in graphic presentation;
Lucasfilm Games for **Indiana Jones and Last Crusade: The Graphic Adventure**—Noah Falstein, David Fox and Ron Gilbert (designers), combining an existing plot with new twists and game elements while continuing to enhance an interface which was already much admired and emulated;
Lucasfilm Games for **Loom**—Brian Moriarty (designer) with Greg Hammond (producer), creating an intense entertainment experience which has remained true to an original philosophical vision of its author in both story and presentation;
Sierra for **Hero's Quest**—Lori Ann and Corey Cole (designers) with Guruka Singh Khalsa (producer), using the tools, expertise and resources of Sierra's successful formula for best-selling graphic adventures and adding a twist of role-playing and a sprinkle of humor to sweeten the plot; and
Sierra for **Leisure Suit Larry III**—Al Lowe (designer and producer) with William Skirvin and Roger Hardy (artists), taking a creative risk in transforming the viewpoint of the game from male to female and continuing to refine the graphic look of the series.

And the **WINNER** of *CGW*'s **Adventure Game of the Year** is:
Sierra for *Hero's Quest*. In combining the adventure game and role-playing genres, this introductory level game has an interesting story, fascinating encounters and intriguing puzzles. It is one of the few introductory games which has received positive feedback from both beginning and advanced gamers.

Role-Playing Game of the Year

Nominees for **Role-Playing Game of the Year** are:
Data East for **Chamber of the Sci-Mutant Priestess**—Arbeit von Spacekraft, Patrick Dublanchet and Michel Rho (designers), creating a real-time adventure with an impressive variety of character skills and objects to encounter, fascinating combination of eerie sounds and mysterious graphics to experience and

(Continued on page 74)



The battle of Gettysburg has long been regarded as the turning point of the American Civil War. The timing and location of the battle depended entirely upon the decisions made by Union General George Gordon Meade and Confederate General Robert E. Lee.

Decision at Gettysburg places you in the headquarters of either the Union Army of the Potomac or the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia. You will have 147 square miles of territory over which to maneuver, the same that confronted both Meade and Lee.

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Storm in the Med

(Continued from page 22)

which requires decision making on the basis of "raw" data and limited intelligence than in pure entertainment products will want to give these products a wide berth. Suffice it to say that *there are no graphics*. The game is totally executed by textual and numerical descriptions of the units and action. While this worked using maps and counters in days of yore (anyone out there remember **Avalon Hill**'s *Dnieper River Line* and *Tanktics*?), Malta Storm provides laminated maps and grease pencils "to keep track of force locations and contact reports" (from the rulebook). As the menus readily list the forces always at their base locations, and contacts take place "out there somewhere" and are streamed across the screen in the form of combat resolution reports, one often finds himself plotting the initial plan of attack on the map and largely disregarding the only visual aid in the game as time progresses.

The use of CSLs to simulate a degree of operational control gives the player a very limited feeling of involvement. The Allied player for instance can direct only 10 of a possible 90 units to perform other than the general actions predetermined by the setting of National Priorities each turn. Even the program's execution of CSL allocations is erratic. One example of this is if the player possesses unexpended CSL points he may transfer units from his strategic pool at will at no CSL cost. On the other hand, if he possesses no points, no transfers can take place. It is also possible to end up ordering a strike, and through a misstroke of the keyboard, end up with no target designated and no CSL point expended. In short, the direction of action is too simplistic and may be too abstract to be gripping.

The military conflict surrounding the epic defense of Malta is the type of historical material that lends itself to great computer games. It includes heavily guarded convoys braving enemy infested waters to relieve desperate garrisons in imminent danger of being overrun by superior amphibious and airborne forces; raiders in the form of fast task forces, submarines, and motor torpedo boats skirmishing with Axis convoys intent on supplying the "Desert Fox's" push on the Suez Canal. Axis air forces struggling to pummel ground facilities into submission while their Allied counterparts struggle to beat them off. Malta Storm misses the mark of making any of this imagery tangible.

As a pure entertainment product, many will feel the limitations placed by *Malta Storm*'s design and lack of chrome makes it a less than desirable game for the casual gamer. As a command study, however, *Malta Storm* has plenty to offer aficionados of military history who are more concerned with strategy than presentation.

Consumer Alert

According to SimCan any revs of Malta Storm other than 1.33 and the 1.2 for IBM contain errors. There are very few of these faulty versions out there for the IBM. Owners will be contacted by SimCan directly. A company spokesman says that they will be issuing a free update notice for owners of the Amiga version of the game. **CGW**







Games of the Year

(Continued from page 70)

delightful amalgam of puzzles;
Electronic Arts for **Starflight 2**—Greg Johnson and Bob Gonsalves (designers) with Roland Kippenhan (producer), establishing a universe with so many cultures, personalities, options and plot twists that it is easy for players to suspend their disbelief;
Interplay for **Dragon Wars**—Paul Ryan O'Connor and Brian Fargo (designers) with Bill Heineman (programmer), involving players through extremely well-written off-line paragraphs, a magic system with more variety, sophistication and lore than most computer role-playing games and multiple solutions to every puzzle;
Mindcraft for **Keys of Maramon**—Ali N. Atabek and James B. Thomas (designers), combining the quick and efficient combat action with a nice mix of some of the skills, encounters and discoveries that made *The Magic Candle* (last year's Adventure Game of the Year) popular; and
Origin for **Ultima VI**—Richard Garriott and Warren Spector (producers), offering an interesting and important story, dynamite graphics using constant scaling, and incredible detail within the world of Britannia.

And the **WINNER** of *CGW*'s **Role-Playing Game of the Year** is:
Electronic Arts for *Starflight 2*. This game offers ample reward for exploration, utilizing curiosity, managing resources and carefully handling trade and negotiation. It expands the notion of role-playing beyond the traditional limits of computer games.

Simulation Game of the Year

Activision for **MechWarrior**—Damon Slye, Mark Brenneman, and Paul Bowman (designers) with John A. S. Skeel and Steve Ackrich (producers), using Dynamix' 3-Space animation and careful attention to the established *BattleTech* universe to create the most amazing simulacrum this side of actually sitting in a cockpit at one of FASA's *BattleTech* centers;
Electronic Arts for **Indianapolis 500: The Simulation**—David Kaemmer (designer) with Richard Hilleman (producer), designing an accurate and fascinating simulation of auto racing without forgetting to put in the special effects, spectator perspective and raw sound so often associated with motor sports;
Microprose for **M-1 Tank Platoon**—Arnold Hendrick and Scott Spanburg (designers), providing a command perspective of unit action combined with the excitement of a three-dimensional first person perspective from the command tank;
Spectrum HoloByte for *Tank*—R. Anton Widjaja, Gilman Louie and Steve Perrin (designers), combining the depth of an authentic military simulation, hot graphics and the capacity for modem-to-modem combat in a playable simulation; and
Strategic Simulations, Inc. for **Dragon-Strike**—Louis Castle and Brett Sperry, introducing a unique subject matter, interesting role-playing shell, and entertaining variety of mission types.

And the **WINNER** of *CGW*'s **Simulation Game of the Year Award** is:
MicroProse for *M-1 Tank Platoon*. By successfully uniting the strategy of a tactical wargame with the excitement of a first-person simulation, Microprose solved some unique design questions and created a playable game on a concept that many felt was not "gameable."

Strategy Game of the Year

The nominees for *CGW*'s **Strategy Game of the Year** are:
Britannica Software for **Revolution '76**—Edward Bever (designer), proving that an educational game can be attractive, stimulating, challenging and deep;
Electronic Arts for **Populous**—Peter Molyneux, Glenn Corpes, Kevin Donkin and Les Edgar (designers) with Jocelyn Ellis (producer), offering "divine" power and a "cosmic" challenge presented via dynamic graphics under the constraints of real time;
Microprose for **Sid Meier's Railroad Tycoon**—Sid Meier and Bruce C. Shelley (designers), utilizing a simple interface, layers of strategy, near perfect mixture of scenarios and trainload of options to provide a lifetime of gaming in one product;
New World Computing for **Nuclear War**—Eric Hyman and Jon Van Caneghem (designers), transforming a wild and wooly card game into a hilarious, fast-playing challenge with graphics (by Avril Harrison) that are hotter than nuclear blasts themselves; and
Strategic Studies Group for **Gold of the Americas**—Stephen Hart and Ian Trout (designers), marrying colorful graphics and humor with a solid strategic concept, multi-player capabilities and sense of history.

And the **WINNER** is:
Electronic Arts for *Populous*. This unique approach to real-time strategy offers more cerebral challenge than reflexive gymnastics in a game that grows in both complexity and appeal.

Wargame of the Year

The nominees for *CGW*'s **Wargame of the Year** are:
Conflict Analytics for **Action Stations**—Alan D. Zimm (designer), developing a game in which depth, challenge and expertise shine through without the encumbrance of expensive graphics;
Simulations Canada for **Kriegsmarine**—James S. Baker and Stephen M. Newberg (designers), creating a series of games that effectively presents the "fog of war" and command perspective in World War II naval encounters without losing playability;
Strategic Simulations, Inc. for **Second Front**—Gary Grigsby (designer), developing a game which does not oversimplify the complexities of the strategic situation being simulated while enabling players to choose their desired level of involvement;
Strategic Simulations, Inc. for *Sword of Aragon*—Kurt Myers and Russell Shilling (designers), taking the concept of a simple fantasy campaign and combining enough elements of role-playing, tactical combat and resource management to create an incredibly playable game; and
Three-Sixty for **Harpoon**—Larry Bond, Becky McGuire, Don Gilman, Mike Jones, Leslie Hill, and Gordon Walton (designers), using the computer for the management of data, handling hidden movement, assisting the flow of play and presenting attractive graphics.

And the **WINNER** is:
Three-Sixty for *Harpoon*. The computer version of the popular miniatures rules is a marvelous example of what can happen when a successful system is translated into a new medium and takes advantage of the strengths of that new medium.

Special Award for Artistic Achievement

From the extended color palette generated by the dithering techniques of Mark Ferrari, the mesmerizing special effects of Ken Macklin, the intriguing facial expressions generated by Gary Winnick and Steve Purcell, through the marvelous digitized soundtrack by George Alistair Sanger, to the artistic way the interface was integrated into the story, *Loom* deserves to be recognized as a work of art.

Overall Game of the Year

This year, *CGW*'s **Game of the Year** is recognized because of its unique subject matter, excellent presentation, and exceptional game play.

And the **WINNER** is:
MicroProse Software for *Sid Meier's Railroad Tycoon*.

And so there you have it. We congratulate all the nominees and the winners. We invite you all to the black-tie reception immediately following this ceremony (to be held in the throne room of Lord British's castle). **CGW**

CES Report

(Continued from page 8)

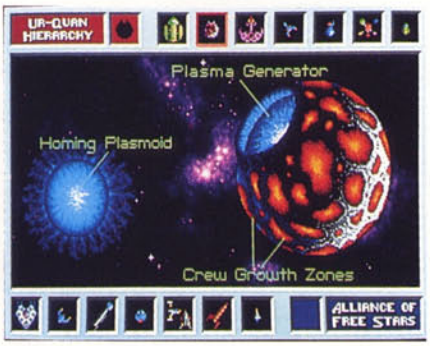
change with the pace of the game using SOUNDTRAX.

MicroProse engages in entertaining espionage with *Covert Action*. The protagonist, named Max, bears little resemblance to the character's namesake, MicroProse graphic artist Max Remington III, and the challenges to be found in the game bear little resemblance to any previous MicroProse game. There are plenty of puzzles to challenge players, as well as plenty of action to stimulate them in this new release.

With *King's Quest V* and *Hero's Quest II* on the way, **Sierra**'s "Two Guys from Andromeda" decided that too much of too many sequels would be too tempting to resist. So, in *Space Quest IV*, they send Roger Wilco tripping through time (and imaginary future Space Quest adventures) in order to avoid trouble with the dreaded Sequel Police. In fact, several avid Sierra gamers were alarmed by last issue's references to the upcoming CD-ROM products (without mention of any pc version of the games). There is no reason to worry. There will also be VGA and EGA (on both low and high density disks) versions of the new graphic adventures from Sierra.

Taito is importing the European hit, *Castle Master*, to the U.S. Unlike many adventure games that, like Clint Eastwood's early films, advanced the plot solely through combat, Castle Master features 3-D polygon-filled technology and plenty of physical (spatially-oriented) puzzles in order to present an adventure which is primarily solved by exploration. The object of the game is to collect ten keys and ten pentangles in order to rescue one's spouse (there are different routes for each sex) from the bad guys.

Three fascinating licenses are ready to peek over the horizon. **SSI** will unveil their *Buck Rogers* role-playing adventure in the fall. The game will use the same basic engine as their successful fantasy series in order to bring the classic pulp science fiction adventures to simulated life. Also, **Miles Computing** revealed that they will unveil their first *Champions* product, a superhero role-playing game at Winter CES (January, 1991) in Las Vegas. Miles anticipates two



Star Control

full-blown Champions products in 1991, as well as a heroes and villains data disk. Finally, **Paragon Software** is preparing *Space 1889*, based on the **Games Designers' Workshop** boardgames. It is expected to be a complex mixture of role-playing, historical discovery and science fiction combat.

Access plans to continue their approach to interactive movie making with *Countdown*, a CIA versus international terrorists romp that uses art by Emmy winner Doug Vandevere (*Muppet Babies*), and *Cartel*, an action/adventure done in the *Crime Wave* style with 3-D axis and up/down scrolling added (unlike the original *Crime Wave*, save games and joystick control will be available in the original product).

Finally, for those who have never played *Dondra*, **Miles Computing** is releasing *QuestMaster 1* (an MS-DOS version of the classic Apple II game with enhanced graphics).

Simulations

Perhaps, the most amazing trend in simulations if the profusion of World War I air combat simulations. There were four different titles shown at the show and many consumers will want all four. **Microprose**'s *Knights of the Sky* is simple, elegant, attractive and features the capacity for modem play. Wild Bill Stealey shot down both editors of *CGW* in modem-to-modem dogfights during the show, but the game still gets "thumbs up" from two guys who absolutely *hate* to lose (especially in public).

Red Baron from **Dynamix** features hotter graphics, a wider selection of planes, and more detail than the other World War I simulations, as well as some fascinating campaign options. It is not expected to have modem play, however. **Three-Sixty**'s *Ace of Aces II* features quality graphics, split-screen two person play and modem play, as well as a purely strategic phased movement version of the dogfights.



The Secret of Monkey Island

Add **Cinemaware**'s *Wings*, a typically cinematic and arcade-oriented game based on the diary of an actual World War I pilot, into the mix and anyone interested in the era will almost have to have all four. The Cinemaware product features 230 movie cards (titled interludes) and action with up to 15 planes on a screen at any given time.

Those who want a more up-to-date simulation might want to choose **Electronic Arts**' *Gorbachev's Ace*, a mission-oriented game with 33 different mission types where players fly an SU-25, or **Spectrum HoloByte**'s *Flight of the Intruder*, based on the best-selling book by Stephen Coonts. It is a mission-based game featuring "actual" Vietnam encounters and attempting to simulate authentic rules of engagement. The former features MCGA graphics and the latter features 16 color VGA graphics. In addition, **Three-Sixty**'s *MegaFortress* offers a mixture of old and new as the player flies a 'teched-up B-52. The game was inspired by Dale Brown's *Flight of the Old Dog* and features missions derived from the adventures in the book.

Also, even those readers who do not have IBM compatibles can enjoy modern air combat with **MicroProse**'s coin-op souped-up version of *F-15 Strike Eagle*. The graphics are so hot, fast and smooth that one has to play it to believe it.

Those who want a combination of World War II action mixed with the "What if?" of fascinating simulation will be interested in **Lucasfilm**'s *Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe*. In the campaign game, part of the player's decision-making is to explore how production and deployment of the ME-262, rocket fighter and flying wing would have affected the balance of the air war in the waning period of World War II. Unlike its predecessors, *Their Finest Hour* and *Battlehawks 1942*, the new air combat game will feature full 256 color VGA graphics, special effects and more detailed flight dynamics, which will have a degradation of performance according to where and how much damage each particular plane can take.

Interestingly enough, **Three-Sixty** is preparing a World

War II submarine simulation with marvelous attention to detail and fabulous VGA graphics (tentatively titled, *Das Boot*), while **MicroProse** is updating their product which established the sub simulator genre with *Silent Service II*.

Another subject which is generating more than one simulation this year is that of space flight/combat. **MicroProse**'s *Lightspeed* features both 3-D polygon-filled combat sequences and role-playing aspects (about 2/3 combat and 1/3 role-playing), while **Origin**'s *Wingleader* emphasizes the "team" aspect of futuristic space combat. Both games feature incredible frame rates during the action sequences (and Lightspeed's "kamikaze rocket", essentially a point-of-view missile, offers a fascinating perspective which shows this fast framing off), but *Wingleader* probably advances the genre the most. In addition to the use of sound that advances the state of the art (see last issue's CES report), Chris Roberts did a wonderful job on the graphics by using supercomputers 3-D ray tracing to develop the images, as well as digitized actual rocks to portray the asteroids in the game. Origin is so excited about the graphics in Wingleader that they plan to use an actual screen shot on the cover of the package rather than the usual painting. Wingleader features a 60 mission campaign with a "tree branching" story so that the player's performance affects the entire campaign.

Finally, **Spectrum HoloByte** is offering *Stunt Driver*, an amazing driving simulation with both construction set and modem-to-modem capabilities. Driving games continue to be popular and Spectrum is attempting to push the envelope.

Strategy

Real-time strategy is becoming extremely popular. **Accolade**'s *Star Control*, **Electronic Arts**' *Powermonger* and **Virgin Mastertronic**'s new space game (the working title was *Quasar*), as well as some of the wargames mentioned in the next section, are all good examples. In the **Virgin Mastertronic** game, expected to be released initially on the Amiga, players use a mouse-driven icon-based interface to balance resources, intelligence and military strategy in something like a real-time *Reach For The Stars* or *Andromeda Conquest*.



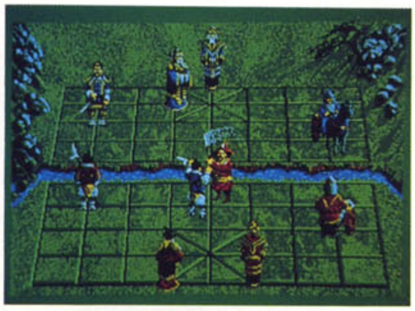
Blade Hunter: Rise of the Dragon

Powermonger is a follow-up game from the creators of *Populous*. Up to four players may compete through serial connection in a real-time world with thousands of simulated people with individual names, addresses and jobs. The game features regionalized weather, enables players to "invent" technological advances using natural resources, select military formations when attacking and updates the game automatically when the player has been away for a while (i.e. the game continues while you are away as in Andrew Greeley's superb novel, *God Game*). The idea of the game is to advance the player's civilization until it permeates the entire world.

Star Control is a one or two player game which features a combination of strategy/action. Unlike the two games discussed earlier, the strategic moves in *Star Control* are not real-time, but the arcade action in which players fight the battles is. The game involves resource management, strategy and arcade action with space ships which handle similar to *Asteroids*.

In spite of the popularity of real-time strategy games, classic strategy games are still popular. **Interplay** is releasing two titles in this category. Amiga owners will want to try *CheckMate*, a traditional chess program with algorithms that match up as equal to or superior to any chess program on the market and *BattleChess II: Chinese Chess*, a dynamic graphic chess variant program.

Accolade also has two classic entries in this category. *Ishido: The Way of Stones*, a fascinating puzzle, matching, strategy and philosophical game (also to be published on the **Sega** *Genesis* machine) where players attempt to match colored stones, symbols and patterns, and *Stratego*, the computer version of the **Milton Bradley** boardgame.



Battlechess II

Stratego, appearing first on the 256 color Macintosh II, will feature standard pre-game set-ups, five different levels of computer opponents, instant replay feature, different boards and pieces, a five game campaign game with different variations and on-line help.

In terms of classics, **Broderbund** is releasing a deluxe version of *Where in the World is Carmen Sandiego?* with 256 VGA colors and lots more chrome (higher levels of difficulty, digitized sound/voices and digitized graphics from the National Geographic Society). They are also preparing a computer version of *Pictionary*. Anyone who has ever been frustrated by their inability to draw anything remotely recognizable will enjoy *Pictionary*'s capacity to draw for them. For those who like the artistic aspect of the game, a mini-paint program is provided (and simplifies shading and filling for those who draw slowly).

Two games of historical strategy were worthy of special note. **Broderbund** unveiled *Galleons of Glory*, a simple strategy game based on Magellan's explorations. The game hinges on resource management (including human resource management) and follows the diary of one of Magellan's crew members. Also, **Taito** is publishing a game with elements of both action and strategy. Entitled *Way of the Pharaoh*, the object of the game is to increase one's social status and it includes: arcade sequences, combat, icon-based trading sequences and resource management.

Finally, two golf games will emphasize the cerebral nature of the sport. **Accolade**'s *Jack Nicklaus Unlimited Golf and Course Design* not only features a new course ("Bear's Track", designed by Nicklaus for this product) and improved game play (e.g. a grid over the green to facilitate putting), but an editor where one can start from dirt and build a course from the terrain up. The product includes a full paint program and a library of pre-built objects.

Electronic Arts unveiled *PGA Tour Golf*. The PGA is assisting in creating course disks for this product and this is the first product to force players to choose their clubs before the round, just like in a real PGA tournament. One to four players can compete in this game which features plenty of

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Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles is available for IBM, Commodore and Amiga.

Circle Reader Service # 37

chrome in terms of "broadcast" interruptions, instant replays with line showing the path of the ball and great sound support.

In **Cinemaware**'s *Dragon Lord*, players have a magical (alchemical?) laboratory at their disposal. One hatches, raises and trains up to eight different dragons; designs potions for controlling these dragons; and sends these dragons out to search for artifacts, attack and conquer enemy villages and raise the funds to keep the "research" and conquest going.

MicroPlay's *Midwinter* is a genre buster that requires skill at role-playing (interaction with up to 32 non-player characters) and 3-D action sequences (snow buggy driving, skiing and hang gliding), as well as strategic insight.

Last, but not least, **Mindscape** is releasing *M.U.L.E.* on the **Nintendo Entertainment System**. Since this classic CGW Hall of Fame game is tough to locate on any platform, this is exciting news.

Wargames

The news for wargamers is better than it has been for several CES shows. Not only were there rumors of **Koei**'s Napoleonic game, *L'Empereur*, appearing near the end of 1990 (or early 1991), but there were new titles from several companies.

MicroProse announced that it would publish *UMS II: Nations at War* under its **MicroPlay** label. The new version of the "Universal Military Simulator" enables eras and units to be mixed, as well as battlefields and entire planets to be edited for future gameplay. Unlike the original product, players can now utilize a more realistic mixture of terrain over the topography of the familiar 3-D grid. In addition, the company will release *Command HQ* under the **MicroPlay** label. Designed by multi-player guru Dan Bunten, Command HQ allows players to compete via modem in conflicts based on World War I, World War II or even future conflagrations. It offers strategic level competition either head-to-head with the computer as a traditional wargame or against a human opponent in a point-to-point connection.

As noted last issue, **Data East**'s *Full Metal Planet* allows up to four players to compete in futuristic warfare. **Ocean** will unleash *Battle Command* from the designers of *Carrier Command*, the 3-D strategy game originally published by **Rainbird** and currently marketed by the **Medalist** division of MicroProse. The biggest difference between the two games is that Battle Command involves futuristic tank combat rather than carrier combat.



Wingleader

With regard to "traditional" wargames, **SSI**'s *Storm Across Europe* is a World War II game using the basic movement/strategy system found in their *Colonial Conquest* of several years back. It has already been on the market for the C-64 for some time, but new Amiga and IBM versions are on their way.

Space is another fertile area for wargames and there are two of particular interest due this fall. **Interstel**'s *Armada 2525* is a one to six player game which is highly reminiscent of the classic *Reach for the Stars* and **SSI**'s *Interceptor* features ship-to-ship combat in the universe of **FASA**'s "Renegade Legion".

Action

Licensed products are the watchword in the action category during the latter portion of the year. **Capstone**'s *The Cardinal of the Kremlin* builds on the best-selling novel by allowing the player to command multiple operatives and handle resource management (in terms of administering research programs) in order to lead up to three action sequences. **Activision** announced *Aliens vs. Predator* for the **Nintendo** system, combining two movie licenses in an action product that *might* be published on the IBM, as well as the video game machine. As noted last issue, British-based **Ocean** plans to market *The Untouchables* and *Clive Barker's Nightbreed* on multiple formats. **Capstone** has collected lots of classic arcade sequences for *Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure* on the IBM. Meanwhile, **Mindscape** is unleashing *Dirty Harry* and Tom Cruise's latest starring vehicle, *Days of Thunder*, on the Nintendo.



Full Metal Planet

On the sports front, **Data East**'s *Bo Does Baseball* features VGA graphics and the capacity for downloading *USA Today*'s statistics directly into the game. Data East also plans to release a three-on-three basketball game based on the *Dream Team* charitable events being staged by James Worthy, Patrick Ewing and Dominick Wilkins. This game will feature "point and press" passing, selection of graphic detail to enhance the action on lower end computers, power meter shooting and an emphasis on the transition game. Finally, **Konami**'s upcoming Nintendo hit, *Bill Elliott's NASCAR Challenge*, is now being prepared to enter the IBM world.

Sequels and updates still permeate the action environment. **Sierra**'s *FireHawk: Thexder 2* is a sequel to a previous Japanese import. This release features more animation and an eleven song soundtrack. **Dynamix** is updating their classic tank shoot-'em-up *Stellar 7* from wire-frame to 3-D polygon-filled graphics. **Taito**'s *Operation Thunderbolt* is a sequel to their popular *Operation Wolf*.

One of the most interesting action games on multiple formats will be **Taito**'s *Kiwi Kraze*. It looks like a Super Mario Brothers-style game with better graphics. Finally, for something completely different, **Cinemaware** is preparing to release *Blood Relatives*, sort of an arcade action meets *Clue* game with nine different murders, a variety of difficulty levels and replayability.

Searching for the Grail (Conclusion)

Probably more than any other CES exhibition during the past few years, this year's show demonstrated a level playing field of technology, a concern for quality product and an awareness of the cross-over mass media appeal for both video games and computer games. The kingdom of computer gaming seems relatively secure, but with the new prominence of cartridge development and investment in the entertainment software industry, the stakes are higher and the dangers greater. For Lord British and all the other pioneers of this industry, may the next ten years be both as profitable and exciting. **CGW**

Conversions Received



Altered Beast (SEGA) IBM

Blades of Steel (Konami) Am,C64,IBM

Blockout (California Dreams) C64

Blood Money (Psygnosis) C64

CastleVania (Konami) C64,IBM

Crime Wave (Access) IBM

Day of the Viper (Accolade) IBM

Fire King (SSG) IBM

Gold of the Americas (SSG) IBM,ST

Greg Norman's Shark Attack! ST

Hole-In-One Miniature Golf-New Courses (DigiTek) IBM

Might & Magic II (New World) Am

Nuclear War (New World) IBM

Panzer Battles (SSG) Mac

Pirates! (Microprose) Am

Power Drift (Activision) IBM

Powerdrome (EA) IBM

Rings of Medusa (Star Games) IBM

Ski or Die (EA) C64

Storm Across Europe (SSI) Am

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles (Ultra) IBM

Tunnels of Armageddon (California Dreams) IBM

Vegas Gambler (California Dreams) C64

Wizardry-New & Improved (Sir-Tech) Mac

Weird Dreams (Microplay) IBM

Welltris (Spectrum Holobyte) Am

Where in the USA is Carmen Sandiego? IIGS

Reader Input Device #74

On the R.I.D. card provided opposite page 8, please rate the following games (if you have played them) and articles (if you have read them) by using a letter grade scale (I.e. A to F). Just rate the games as if you were an educator. As with the world of education, the scale will translate to:

A = Excellent
B = Above Average
C = Average
D = Below Average
F = Failure

If you wish, you may assign pluses (+) or minuses (-) to your letter grade (i.e. B+, B-, C+, C-, etc.). As always, rate only those games that you have played.

Demographics

(List the appropriate number)

1. What is your age ?

1 = Under 14 years old
2 = 14-17 years old
3 = 18-20 years old
4 = 21-30 years old
5 = 31-35 years old
6 = 36-40 years old
7 = 41-50 years old
8 = 51+ years old

2. What machine(s) do you play games on? (List all numbers that apply. List the machine you use most often first, the others in descending order of use).

1 = IBM, clones, Tandy
2 = Amiga
3 = Apple 8 bit
4 = Apple IIgs
5 = Atari ST
6 = Atari 8 bit
7 = C-64/128
8 = Macintosh
9 = Other (specify)

3. How much time do you typically spend playing computer games each week?

1 = Less than 2 hours
2 = 2-5 hours
3 = 6-10 hours
4 = 11-20 hours
5 = 21-30 hours
6 = 31+ hours

RID #74 Questions

Games

4. Balance of the Planet (Crawford)
5. Second Front (SSI)
6. Circuit's Edge (Infocom)
7. Search for the King (Accolade)
8. Wolfpack (Broderbund)
9. Sid Meier's Railroad Tycoon (MicroProse)
10. Tank (Spectrum Holobyte)
11. Combots (Avalon Hill)
12. DragonStrike (SSI)
13. Centurion: Defender of Rome (EA)
14. Their Finest Hour (Lucasfilm)
15. F-19 Stealth Fighter (MicroProse)
16. Sim City (Maxis)
17. M-1 Tank Platoon (MicroProse)
18. Harpoon (Three-Sixty)
19. Populous (Electronic Arts)
20. Ultima VI (Origin)
21. Battlehawks 1942 (Lucasfilm)
22. Sword of Aragon (SSI)
23. Wasteland (Electronic Arts)
24. Secret of the Silver Blades (SSI)
25. Hero's Quest (Sierra)
26. Strike Aces (Accolade)
27. Dragon Wars (Interplay)
28. Indianapolis 500 (EA)
29. Bad Blood (Origin)
30. Keys of Maramon (Mindcraft)
31. Escape From Hell (Electronic Arts)
32. Street Rod (California Dreams)
33. Crime Wave (Access)
34. Blades of Steel (Konami)
35. Pirates! (MicroProse)
36. Storm Across Europe (SSI)
37. Mech Warrior (Activision)
38. Omega (Origin)
39. Future Wars (Interplay)
40. Bandit Kings (Koei)

Articles

41. CES Report
42. Lord of the Rings Sneak
43. Centurion Review
44. Sands of Fire Review
45. Railroad Tycoon Strategy
46. Scorpion's Mail
47. Malta Storm Review
48. Opinion on Earthrise
49. Future Wars Review
50. General Quarters Review
51. Editorial
52. Games of the Year
53. Rumor Bag

Other Questions

54. What is the last movie you saw in a theater?

55. What is the last book that you have read?

56. Out of the computer games which you buy, what percentage do you complete?

Taking the Industry's Pulse

State of the Magazine: This issue, *CGW* focuses on the entertainment software industry by means of recognizing achievement with our annual **Game of the Year** awards; highlighting the immediate future of the entertainment software industry with the second half of our Summer Consumer Electronics Show report; and summarizing some of the more interesting presentations at this year's Game Developers' Conference. *CGW*'s readers have always been interested in the background, trends and news surrounding computer entertainment, as well as the products which are already on the market. Therefore, we have devoted a substantial amount of this issue to providing this more technical coverage of the industry.

CGW, the oldest computer game magazine in the world, is expanding its circulation almost threefold with this issue. Thousands of you may be reading *CGW* for the first time. If this is your first exposure to *CGW*, we hope that you like what you see and that you will be joining our family of dedicated readers.

State of the Industry: Those who are familiar with fantasy role-playing are aware of the magical potion described in many systems as "universal solvent." This most useful substance also has, of course, some most unusual drawbacks. Since it dissolves, literally, anything, it can be extremely handy when it comes to melting pesky locks or eliminating dangerous slime creatures, but what happens when it touches a character's limbs or is deliberately poured into a bag of holding? It definitely leads to unexpected problems.

Will Wright, designer of *SimCity* and the upcoming *SimEarth*, shared an impressive vision with game designers at last spring's *Game Developers' Conference*. He envisioned an IFF-style file for games that would save data in standardized formats so that players could switch accomplishments from one imaginary world to another. For instance, one might be able to use the road system from *SimCity* in order to race in *Vette* or one's approval rating for the former might be enhanced by one's accomplishments in, say, *Ultima VI*.

Like the universal solvent of the magical realm, Wright's vision offers almost limitless possibilities, but potentially leaves an incredible amount of obstacles to be overcome. His proposal demonstrates a vision far beyond the isolated individual game designer and/or ancillary product focus of the competitive software publisher and challenges some of the basic assumptions underlying entertainment software competition.

In many ways, software is produced in a corporate environment not unlike that of large defense contractors. Instead of military secrets, there is proprietary code. Instead of classified information relating to national security, there are carefully protected marketing demographics and there must be a careful handling of *actual* sales figures. The entertainment software industry continually urges the hardware manufacturers to standardize, but there is very little information sharing taking place within the software industry. Even such a "simple" issue as whether to move to high density disks as the primary medium for game disks is fraught with contradictory rumors, closely-held secrets and no effort to standardize.

In order for Will Wright's vision to succeed, an extraordinary channel of communication would need to be opened in the creative sector of the industry, as well as the business sector of the industry. A summit meeting would decide what types of data would be important to save in the standardized format, how much space would be reserved for future data types, how often this format would be reviewed and who would participate in the review process. Summit participants would have to determine if there was any "real" value to making such a Herculean effort or if this was simply a minor piece of chrome. Marketing representatives would have to consider the implications for expanding the types of and number of marketing channels available for ancillary products based on the potential cross-overs of various programs. Designers would have to determine if standardized types of data would undermine the creativity factor in future designs or simply give yet another tool to work with.

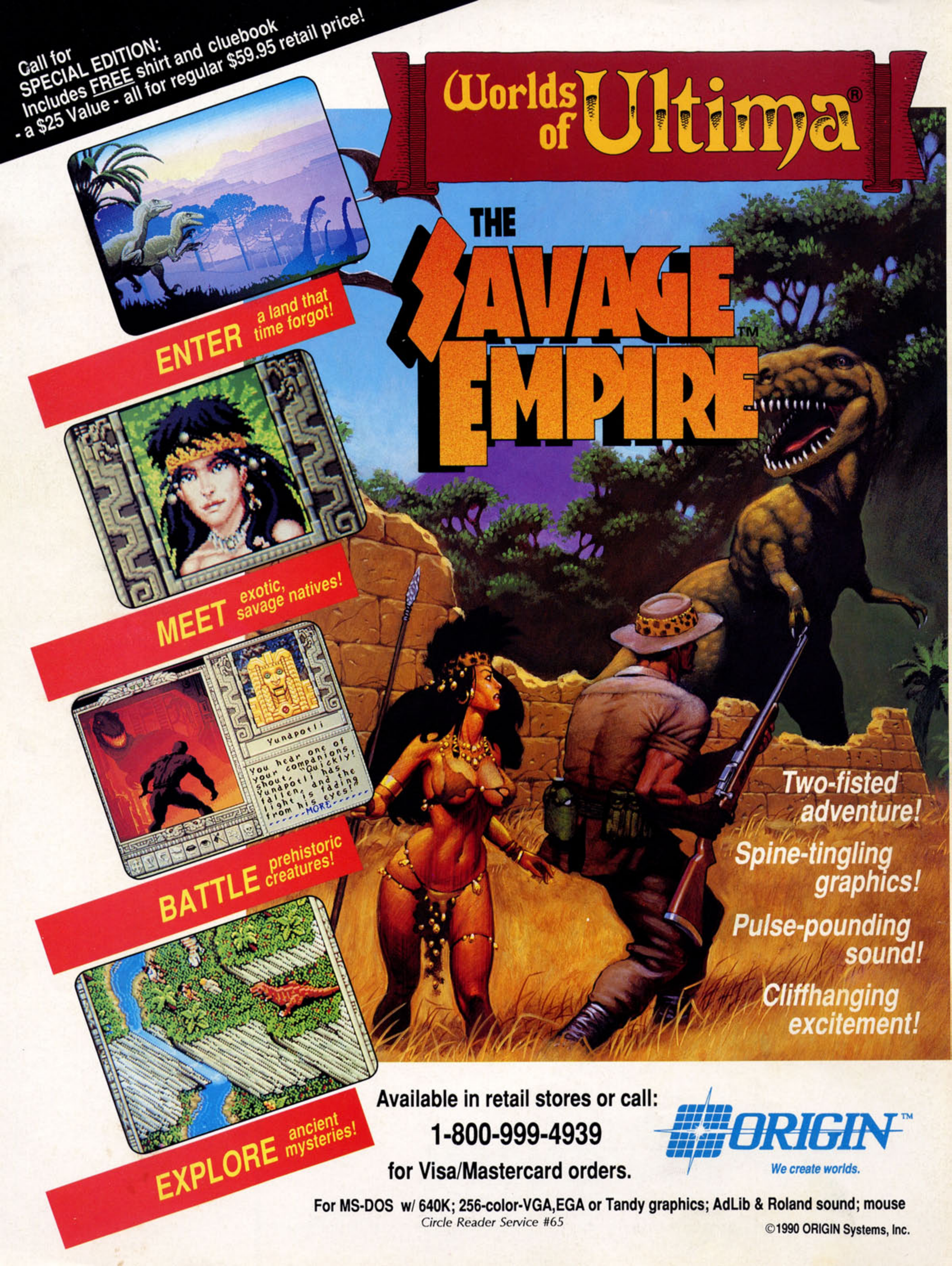
Frankly, we'd like to see such an industry-wide effort, but the potential for spilling "universal solvent" on an entire industry is certainly there. Notice, for example, how inconsistently the marketing channel handles support products at the present. Data disks tend to get lost in the shuffle of the next new release for several reasons, non-standard packaging, lower profit margin for retailers and lack of advertising/marketing effort on behalf of publishers. Further, conversions tend to get less shelf space because they are often considered to be an "older" title.

In order to make the effort work, the industry would have to decide that the universal game file format (UGFF?) was worth selling. It would require a solid cooperative front of marketing wizardry to make consumers want to pay whatever extra it takes to add this feature to virtually *all* products produced in the U.S. It might even become the competitive edge for the U.S. software industry until such point as a world-wide standard could emerge.

Visionary dreams tend to revitalize and excite one. They get the creative juices flowing. Even if they don't come together the way they are initially described, they tend to make one reach further than one has before. Let's hope Will Wright's vision doesn't get lost in the whirlwind of economic competition. We *need* dreams.

CGW


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